THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

OLD!

# retro GAMER™




**1985 – 2010**

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ISSUE 82 £4.99

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# THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MARIO GAME?




## DARRAN JONES

It's *Super Mario Galaxy 2* by a country mile. The fact that Nintendo can still make a brand new game that totally redefines the genre is just so… well, it's just so Nintendo.

**Expertise:**
Juggling a beautiful wife, two lovely girls and **Retro Gamer**

**Currently playing:**
*Magic The Gathering Online*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Strider*




## STUART HUNT

Incredibly tough to pick just one, but I'd probably answer *Super Mario Bros 3*. It's a wonderfully crafted game that hasn't aged a note, and showcases Miyamoto and Mario at their very best.

**Expertise:**
Games with flying bits in them

**Currently playing:**
*Kuru Kuru Kururin*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Kuru Kuru Kururin*




## JASON KELK

I'll plump for the first *Super Mario Bros*, both for the impact it had at the time and because I still sit down with it occasionally.

**Expertise:**
Delving through all the latest homebrew releases

**Currently playing:**
*Fire Hawk*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Io*




## CRAIG GRANNELL

I've always found the more famous *Mario* platformers fiddly, so my top pick is the wonderful platform puzzler *Mario vs Donkey Kong* on the GBA. It's fun, taxing and suitably retro.

**Expertise:**
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control

**Currently playing:**
*Beyond Ynth*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*H.E.R.O.*




## DAVID CROOKES

*Super Mario Bros* on the NES was the bestselling game of all time for absolutely ages, and it remains my favourite because of the fond memories of being introduced to the little plumber.

**Expertise:** All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Lynx and PlayStation

**Currently playing:**
*Mafia II*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Broken Sword*




## PAUL DRURY

*Donkey Kong*, but if that doesn't count, then the pinnacle of platformers: *Super Mario World*.

**Expertise:**
Games with prizes

**Currently playing:**
*Last Window*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sheep In Space*



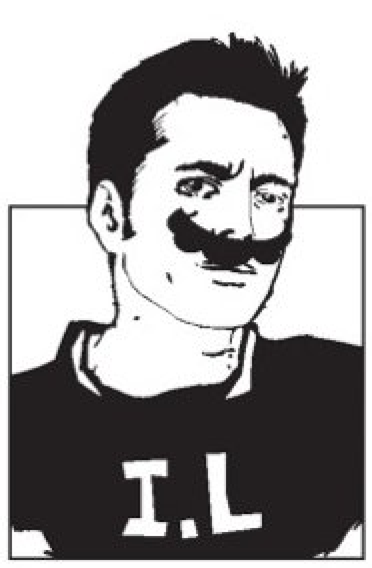

## PAUL DAVIES

*Mario 64*. Nobody could believe what it was doing at the time. 'So I can jump off the bridge and into the water?' etc.

**Expertise:**
Banging my head against a brick wall

**Currently playing:**
*Monster Hunter Tri*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Ghouls 'N Ghosts*




## IAIN LEE

*Donkey Kong*, although that's seemingly being written out of Mario history. In that case I'll go for Mario Kart: Double Dash!! on GameCube

**Expertise:** Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live

**Currently playing:** *FIFA 11*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Elite*




## RICHARD BURTON

Super Mario Kart for the SNES. It's not just my preferred Mario game but favourite SNES game ever and the reason I bought the console in the first place.

**Expertise:** Stuff and nonsense

**Currently playing:**
*Thing On A Spring*

**Favourite game of all time:**
*Manic Miner*

# LOADING…

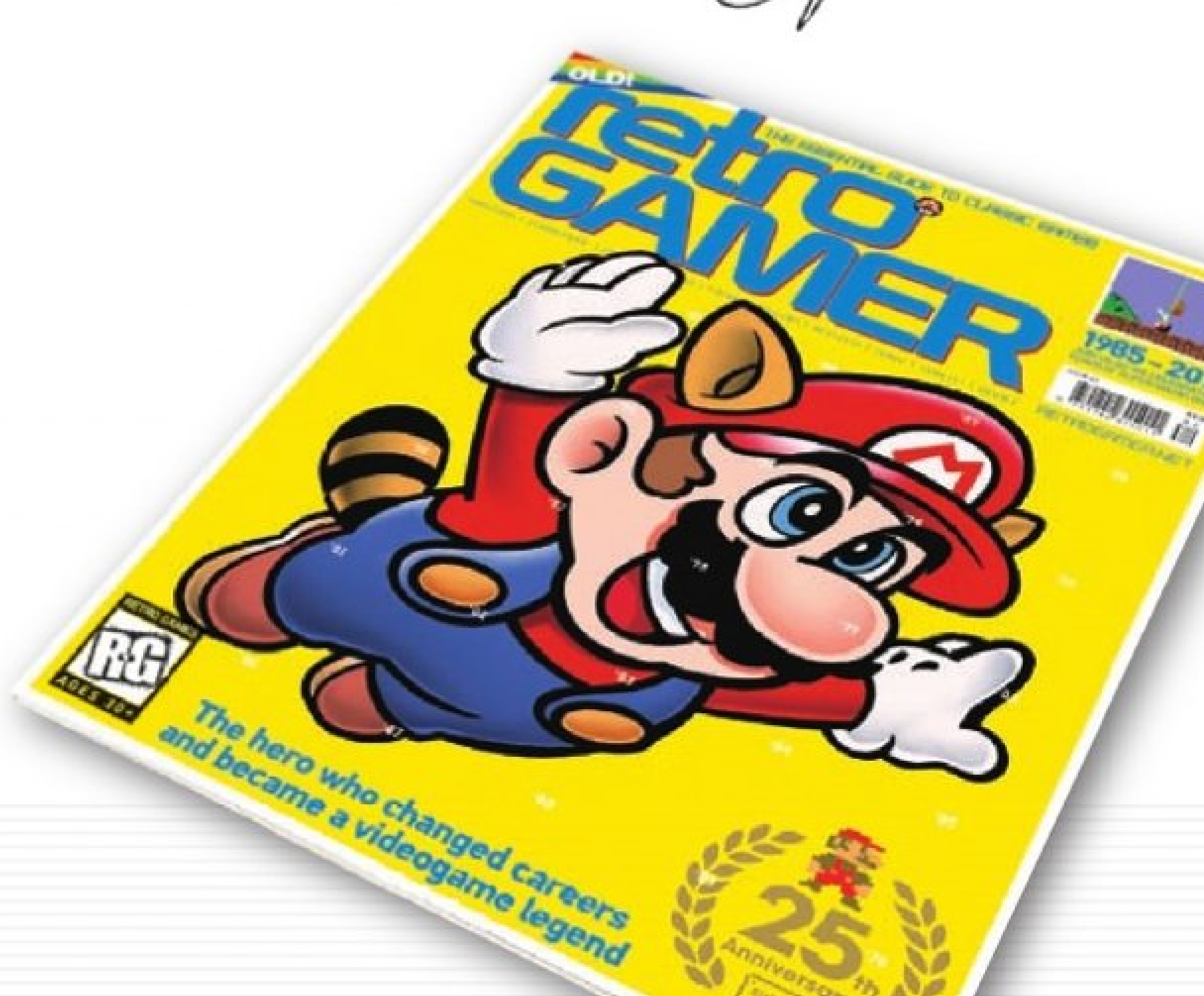
**If you've seen our cover you'll have no doubt realised that we've gone a bit gaga for Mario this month. In fact, I'm actually writing this on the anniversary of his NES debut, which makes me feel old, as I can still recall the childlike wonder I felt when I first saw *Super Mario Bros* in my local Boots.**

What will no doubt amaze many of our readers – especially fervent Mario fan and forum follower Jet Pilot – is just how long it's taken for a dedicated Mario feature to appear in the magazine. Sure, we've mentioned the popular plumber in the past – 1,793 times in non-related Mario features over our first 55 issues according to Bland_Boy, another regular forum member – and we've even dedicated the odd two-page spread to him, but we've never given him the sort of coverage that he's receiving here.

Let's face it, though: if anyone deserves to be in a magazine dedicated to classic games, it's Mario. He's the equivalent of The Beatles, Steven Spielberg or any other cultural icon, and his impact can't be underestimated.

If you're a Mario fan then you'll hopefully be in seventh heaven with this issue. If you're not, rest assured that there are plenty of other great articles to read.

Enjoy the magazine,



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**>> Load 82** Breathing new life into classic games

## FEATURED



## RETRO REVIVALS







## In the hot seat this month…











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## " A truly astonishing piece of work " Darran Jones



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How a Buffy lookalike, gripping storyline and huge cast of characters turned into one of the GameCube's greatest games



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Discover the history behind Jamie Fenton's classic arcade hit



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How a company with no videogame experience learned to fly



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**26 THE DAM BUSTERS**

Regular reader Ian Marks looks back at US Gold's Spectrum hit and wonders why he used to enjoy playing it so much.





## ESSENTIALS



## RETRO RATED







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**www.retrogamer.net**

# retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD




>> It's a relatviely quiet front as far as retro news is concerned. There's a cool charity event taking place in Exeter, while Nintendo has just announced a new/old Mario compilation for the Wii. Otherwise, it's just a case of sitting pretty and counting down the time until R3Play…

## CONTENTS





# CHARITY BEGINS AT THE BARN

## DO SOMETHING FOR CHARITY THIS YEAR: PLAY SOME ARCADE CLASSICS



» So many classic games to play and it's all for a great cause as well. What more do you need?

**If moving home is perceived to be one of the most stressful things the human brain can experience, can you imagine the trauma and sheer logistics involved in trying to move a barn full of classic arcade machines? Well, having recently upped sticks and moved their entire hangar of coin-ops to a glamorous new 'heated' site in Exeter, Shaun Meldon and the rest of the chaps over at Arcade Barn know first-hand, and were understandably left a little knackered, and, you'd think, wanting to take a nice break from gaming for a bit. You'd think. Well, no sooner have they crossed one big job off on their calendar are the guys busy preparing for a charity evening to help raise money for Children In Need, while Bruce, the team's version of Murdock, tries to hastily fix those machines that didn't quite survive the bumpy transit entirely unscathed.**

Wanting to earn as much money as possible for Pudsey's cause this year, Shaun got in touch with us and asked if we'd give his forthcoming charity event a mention. Well, we thought we'd go one better and ask Shaun to tell us a little more about Arcade Barn and what people can expect to see, and play, at the event.



» Shaun Meldon

**RG: How long has Arcade Barn been running now, and where did the idea behind it originate?**
**SM:** Arcade Barn has been running on and off since 2008. The idea behind it was purely a place to store the arcade games I had bought and needed to store. The games slowly grew, and I thought perhaps it would be fun to invite people to play them rather than just me hoarding them, and so I set them up so people could play them and Arcade Barn was born.

**RG: What was the first arcade machine you ever bought?**
**SM:** A JAMMA-converted *Robotron* in 1996, I think it was. I bought it from a local operator with a few games like *RoboCop*, and it was great fun despite not being a real *Robotron* any more. I had this in our flat, which the girlfriend was not too keen on. I sold it later and then started collecting more and that was the beginning of the hobby.

**RG: Can you tell us about the people working behind the scenes at Arcade Barn?**
**SM:** Everyone at the Barn are volunteers, as it is really just a hobby. I have two fellow collectors, Aran and Bruce, who help fix things and they enjoy all things arcade. My long-suffering girlfriend Dawn helps




» Right at the front of this picture is a sit-down *Star Wars* cabinet. That's the first thing we'll be heading to.

### GO DEEPER

>> Those visiting the Barn will be able to play plenty of classic games, and they will all be on freeplay.

>> Shaun Meldon has been running Arcade Barn since 2008. One day we'll actually make good on our promise to visit it.

>> Last year's event netted £500 for charity. Shaun hopes to get even more this year.



keep me from spending too much, and Aran's girlfriend Kate is good at keeping Twitter up to date. Even my dad pitches in and has made us workbenches. I am also looking forward to training up my three-year-old daughter Emily as a new recruit to the cause.

**RG: You've recently moved to a new location. What was the reason for the move?**
**SM:** We were in a great big barn – hence the name – which was an old dairy parlour for a few years, but during the winters it was virtually unusable due to the cold, and it did get damp. We often all huddled around a gas heater and all we could do was look at the games. We decided to move to Exeter's trading estate Marsh Barton, into a nice heated unit with 24-hour access so we could offer all-year-round gaming, which is important if we are to make Arcade Barn a success. I am looking forward to being able to feel my toes during the winter nights!

**RG: How many arcade machines does the Barn currently have, and which draw the biggest crowd?**
**SM:** We have around 35 machines normally working, but as you would expect some do break down. Often the usual suspects. Yes, you, *Defender*! Atari's *Star Wars* cockpit draws people to it as it's such an iconic Atari game and still fantastic fun. Konami's *Track & Field* also gets people into a competitive spirit! We've had to replace the buttons lots as it takes a lot of button-mashing.



**RG: Can you tell us a little about this free gaming night that you're hosting to raise money for Children In Need this year?**
**SM:** This is the third year in a row we will be doing a Children In Need event. We will open up Arcade Barn on Friday 19 November from 6pm until 11pm and all the games are on freeplay, so everyone can play all the games. All we ask is a donation to our Children In Need collection on the night. We hope to get a big turnout and create a fantastic atmosphere.

**RG: You ran a similar event for the charity last year. Are you able to tell us how much money you raised that time?**
**SM:** We raised over £500 last year, which was a great total and we were really pleased with it.

**RG: Are you confident that you can smash that total this year?**
**SM:** Yes, very confident. I am hoping we will have more visitors and everyone will dig deep into their pockets for such a great cause.

**RG: What can people attending the night expect from the evening?**
**SM:** Free games all night so you can play all the games, including the chance to play some very rare games like Atari's *Liberator* and Midway's *Trog*. You can also meet fellow arcade fans and talk about games all night.

**RG: How can those wishing to find out more do so?**
**SM:** They turn up on the night at 39 Marsh Green Road West, Marsh Barton, Exeter, Devon, EX2 8PN; visit our website at **www.arcadebarn.co.uk**; or call me on 07715 560510 for more details. *

## The games you need to play…

>> We ask Shaun to give us his three top coin-op picks for the charity event



### Track & Field

Shaun tells us that Konami's button-mashing classic always draws a crowd. As such, it's the machine that tends to take the most pounding. Thankfully the guys realise that games are meant to be played and enjoyed, and if this involves a bit of TLC afterwards then so be it. Still, if you're attending this November try to go easy on the old gal; she's not getting any younger.



### Star Wars

*Star Wars* is the most popular coin-op at Arcade Barn, attracting a steady flow of wannabe Mr Skywalkers looking to experience the thrill of piloting an X-Wing and save the galaxy from the Empire. The sit-down version is highly sought-after and becoming increasingly hard to come by these days, which is why Shaun considers it to be the rather large jewel in Arcade Barn's coin-op collection.



### Space Duel

For those unaware, and it's likely as its title hardly makes a big song and dance of the fact, this Atari game is a relation of *Asteroids*. Yup, it's basically a two-player version with new obstacles to destroy and avoid and lustrous colour graphics – well, lustrous for their day. This is another coin-op rarity and another coin-op that Shaun was pleased to have recently sourced for the collection.

## THE RETRO DEBATE

>> We ask forum members to give us their fundraising ideas

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

**Ralph Milne's Left Foot**
24-hour challenge on *Gran Turismo 4*? Do all the 24-hour races in order?

**speedlolita**
All the *Gran Turismo 2* endurance races back to back.

**James A**
24-hour tournament on *Rise Of The Robots*.

**Fred83**
Wear every retro-related T-shirt and play all the Retro Shamers on the hardest difficulty setting.

**DPrinny**
The broken controls endurance challenge: you play a game with controllers that don't work right and you time how long it is before you feel like breaking the damn thing in two.

**Rory Milne**
The *Super Mario Kart* blind drunk gaming challenge! Rules: Players buy a ticket to enter for which they receive six cans of strong beer. A judge allows them just ten minutes to drink said beer – failure to do so means an automatic disqualification – before letting them go head-to-head with a sober *SMK* specialist on Nintendo's race-'em-up classic. Any swearing on the players' behalf during play results in their having to put all the change they have on them into a charity swear jar. In the unlikely event that they win they get full bragging rights and their name on a winners board.

**Ferret Oxide**
Paintball *Space Invaders*: one person against a team of others who are forced to sidestep in a predictable pattern and only shoot straight ahead.

**Megamixer**
A contest to see how many original Xboxes a person can hold before they do their back in. I predict that two of them would be a challenge.

**Rinoa**
When I was in the air cadets, one of our fundraisers was a 24-hour 'stay-awake-athon'. We all brought our own consoles and games to keep us awake/amused at the squadron. It was really good fun. Loads of multiplayer madness, plus I managed to complete *MGS2* in one straight run.



**Here's the bio...**
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *Two Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.




Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

# Meeting Miyamoto

**It's often said that you should never meet your heroes. I've never quite understood that. My heroes have always acted just how I imagined they would. Gene Simmons from Kiss was the arrogant rock star I was expecting. Wonderful. Andy Partridge from XTC was the charming, slightly shy gentleman his records had told me he would be. And Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of Mario, was as enthusiastic and as childlike as his games imply.**

I had been fortunate enough to be granted an interview with Miyamoto-san for a documentary I was filming about videogames. We were lucky. Other people had asked and had been refused. What made this even more amazing was we were going to interview the man at Nintendo headquarters in Kyoto. No one got to go in there. I was Charlie and I had found my golden ticket to enter the chocolate factory.

Nintendo HQ is an odd building. If I remember correctly, it was hidden away on the edge of a housing estate. A dull, grey building, which gives no clue as to the magic inside.

After clearing the very tight security, my friends and I were ushered into a dull, lifeless room and watched by several Japanese executives. It was quite tense. At the time, I spoke no Japanese and their English wasn't great. There was a lot of sitting in silence, twiddling thumbs and polite smiles. From us. The execs' faces did not crack at all.

After what seemed like an age, the legend himself breezed into the room. And suddenly, the atmosphere totally changed. It was like a light had been switched on. There was laughter, smiles and warm, welcoming chat – again, not from the Japanese execs. They stayed stony-faced.

The thing I remember about Miyamoto-san was his enthusiasm. He was so happy to talk about his contribution to videogames, about playing, about his ideas. He was genuinely touched that a film crew had flown all the way from the UK to interview him, and he seemed puzzled that we were treating him with such reverence. If I had to use one word to describe him, it would be 'humble'. He was a very humble man.

We chatted for an hour or so, and he totally entertained us. He drew some Mario sketches for us on a white board and my biggest regret about that day is that I didn't ask him to draw something on a sheet of paper for me. How cool would that be? To own a Miyamoto original?

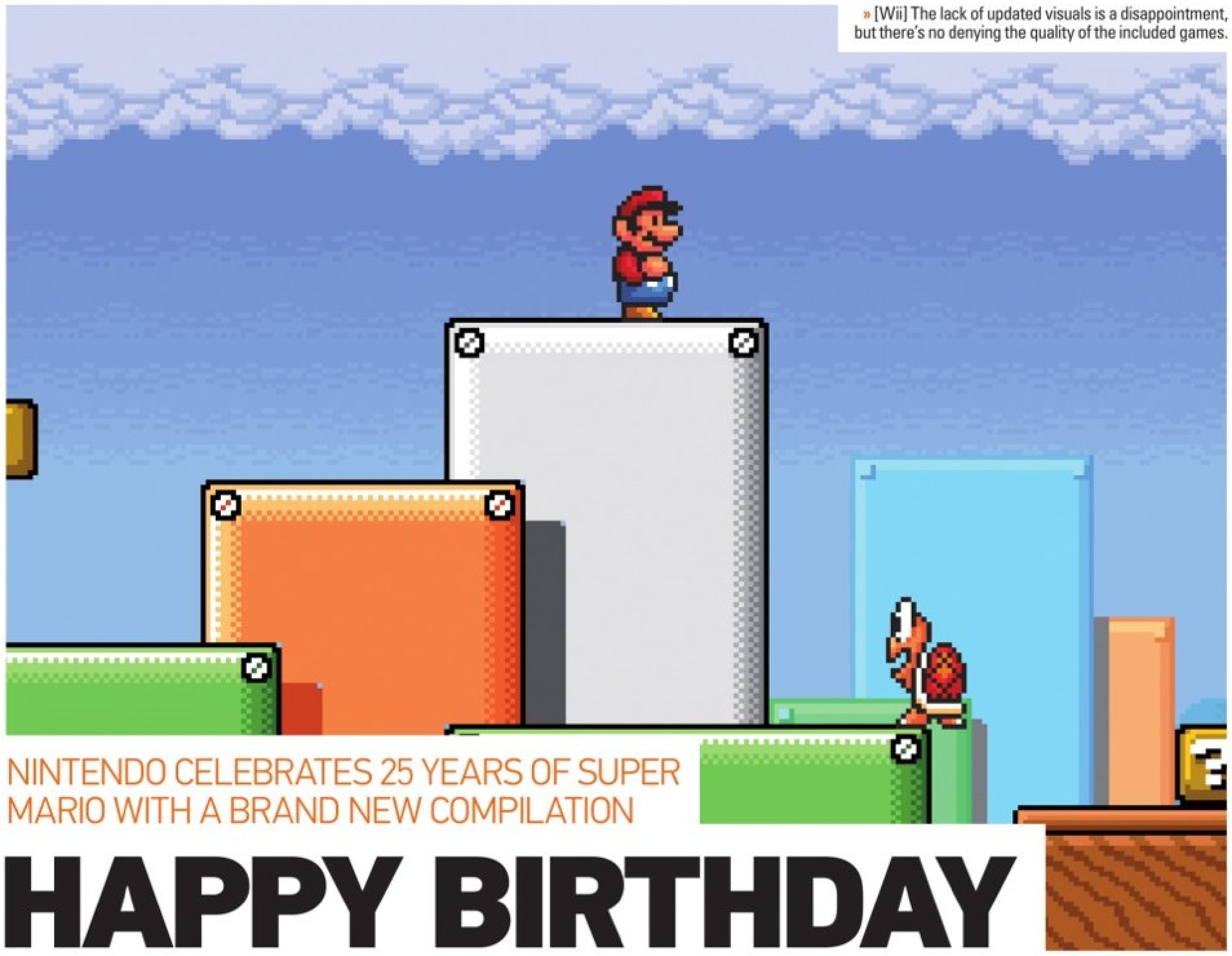
The word 'genius' gets bandied around a lot these days, and it's almost always used as a lazy description and in entirely the wrong context. My definition of a genius is someone who can see the world in a completely different way to others, and then express that difference in some artistic form. Miyamoto-san fits that bill. He is a legend whose influence in videogames, art and popular culture cannot be overlooked.

Saying that, it has to be said that I did totally beat him at *Mario Bros*.



Illustration by **Lee Piper**

I was Charlie and I had found my golden ticket to enter the chocolate factory



» [Wii] The lack of updated visuals is a disappointment, but there's no denying the quality of the included games.

NINTENDO CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SUPER MARIO WITH A BRAND NEW COMPILATION

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

**If you've flicked through this current issue or seen our front cover you're probably aware that 2010 is something of a big year for videogame's most famous plumber. Keen to continue celebrating 25 years of its *Super Mario Bros* franchise, Nintendo has recently announced a brand new compilation for fans of the series. Namely, the return of *Super Mario All-Stars*.**

Now before you start becoming giddy with excitement, we feel it's only fair to point out that this isn't an updated remake, but the original games. You won't be getting *Super Mario Bros 1, 2, 3* and *The Lost Levels* in the graphical style of *New Super Mario Bros Wii*, but the games as they appeared on the SNES.

No doubt realising that putting four ROMs of games that are already available on the Virtual Console onto a disc isn't really going to cut it, Nintendo has also revealed that it will be packaged with two rather swanky extras: a full-colour art book featuring artwork from the past 25 years, and a CD of *Mario* music that features tunes from the original game as well as *Super Mario Galaxy 2*.

While no news of a UK release has so far been announced, it hasn't stopped the internet from gnashing its teeth over what some feel is a surprisingly lazy package, particularly as it would have been easy enough to include both *Super Mario World* and *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*.

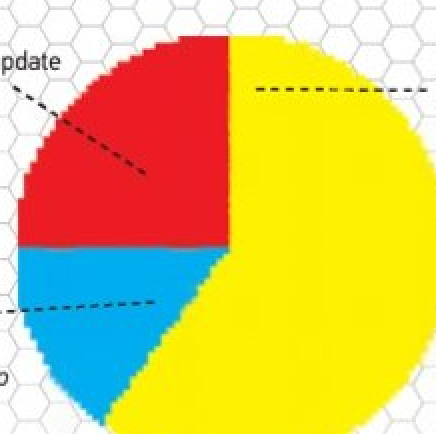
Of course, what these sourpusses are forgetting is that you're still being treated to four of the greatest games of all time, and Nintendo has already confirmed that the compilation has a budget price tag, which should translate to a similar deal when it's inevitably released over here in the United Kingdom.

We'll admit to being somewhat disappointed that this isn't a definitive *Mario* collection – we'd imagine that there's more than enough space on a Wii disc to fit all the *Super Mario* games up to *Super Mario Galaxy* – but we can't say we're not looking forward to getting our hands on this swish-looking pack. With our SNES currently out of commission – we pulled it apart for a retro feature we were planning, as you do – and a Virtual Console release now looking incredibly unlikely, this is going to be the best and easiest way of reliving some of Mario's greatest adventures. Needless to say, you can expect a definitive review of the complete package in a future issue of the magazine. *

## FORUM OPINION

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

### Are you looking forward to Super Mario All-Stars?




"*Super Mario World* with a *NSMB Wii* overhaul would be a must-buy for me" – **SexyWayne**

"The games themselves don't particularly interest me but the extras you get with the package do" – **felgekarp**

"Unless they update the visuals, I think it's a pointless release that would be much better suited to being a Virtual Console download" – **ToxieDogg**

## MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro




### » Hare trigger app

Wondered what Jon Hare has been up to recently? He's only gone and made a funky looking shoot-'em-up for the iPhone. Known as *Shoot To Kill*, it's a slick-looking blaster that has you facing off against ever-increasing waves of vicious demons. Interestingly, it also features a new payment system called Free For Freaks, which enables you to play the whole game for nothing – providing you're good enough. Check it out now by visiting the App Store.

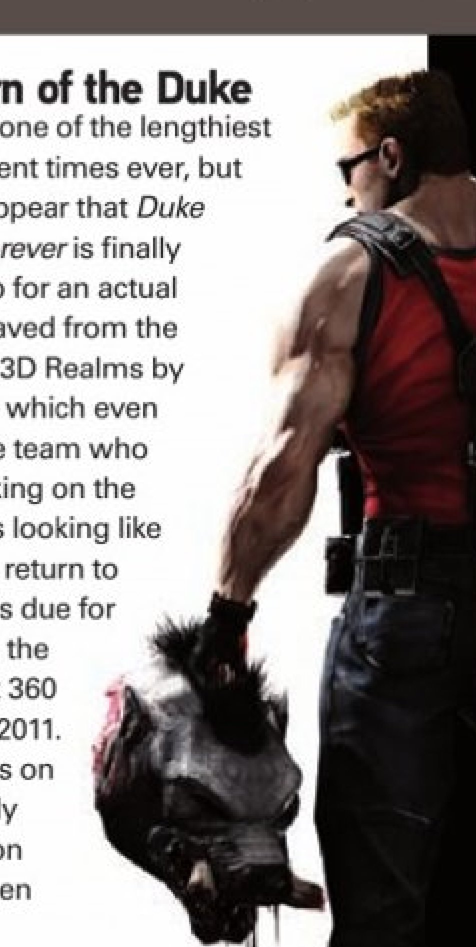



### » I Chu Chu choose you

Sega recently revealed a surprise announcement that had us flipping with excitement. The big news? Only that *ChuChu Rocket* would be heading to the iPhone and iPad. Featuring all the levels from the original game and supporting online play, we're getting dreadfully excited about this update. The iPad version will be able to support a simultaneous four-player mode too.

### » Return of the Duke

It has had one of the lengthiest development times ever, but it would appear that *Duke Nukem Forever* is finally gearing up for an actual release. Saved from the closure of 3D Realms by Gearbox – which even rehired the team who were working on the game – it's looking like a cracking return to form and is due for release on the PS3, Xbox 360 and PC in 2011. More news on this unlikely resurrection as and when we get it.



**Here's my bio…**
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *CVG*. I led the *CVG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.




Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of CVG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

# Confessions of a Plumber

**'Right, what's all the fuss about *Mario*?' I decided to find out after another glowing review in *Mean Machines*. I honestly thought *Mario* games looked crap, but Jaz Rignall obviously knew better. And he really did.**

The first time I 'experienced' *Mario* – you can't say 'played' any more – was in Comet. They had a NES set up near the Jamo speakers that looked like giant cheese graters. I was right; it did look rubbish to my untrained eyes. I picked up the controller with a sneer. Half an hour later I headed home in the rain – it always rains in Rochdale – thinking about my 'experience'. And I decided that I was addicted, so quickly became obsessed with the idea of buying a Super Famicom.

*Super Mario World* was the first *Mario* game I owned. I don't go as far back as *Super Mario Bros 3*, though I enjoyed that film *The Wizard* and really liked the idea of this massive tournament just for videogames. Before *Mario* and *The Wizard* it was like videogames were things you got to the end of on normal and then maybe hard after a few stiff Vimptos. *The Wizard* really inspired me to think about videogames as a skill performance, and I respected Mario as the ambassador.

Even now I can't honestly say that I love Mario as a character, though Nintendo did a great job with the *Paper Mario* series to push the humour. What I do hugely admire about *Mario* platform games, and the reason I went after all 96 levels in *Super Mario World*, is that the gameplay is so pure. Play any *Mario* game and it's as though the code is hardwired into the console, and your fingers are hardwired to the controls. If your brain is buzzing, you can perform the coolest tricks in the hope of discovering something magical – like that bit in *The Wizard* when the cute autistic kid shows everyone the secret exit to World 1-3. And the crowd goes wild.

So my favourite videogame characters are ones I wish I could draw, and at some point consider owning a pointless statue of, to the continuing bewilderment of my wife. Mario just isn't this kind of character, but he is truly an icon. He was originally designed as a functional hero to be seen clearly against a black backdrop on an old coin-op CRT monitor. Nintendo has never lost sight of this basic purpose, and it's only traitors like Yoshi who get to star in nonsense such as *Yoshi's Safari*.

With Mario you always get the good stuff, which takes a leaf out of Disney's book of brand identity, but has surely also influenced many of the best franchises around today. Action games aimed at kids are still borrowing from *Mario 64*, and still cannot rival *Mario Sunshine* for complexity softened by adorability. The only reason *Super Mario Galaxy* hasn't been ripped off is because it's just so freaky and clever that nobody will even dare. Hence we get more *Mario 64* clones or, failing that, a driving game or first-person shooter.

I'd say maybe *Gears Of War* is the best game that Shigeru Miyamoto never made.



Illustration by **Lee Piper**

I picked up the controller with a sneer. Half an hour later I was addicted

# THE Vault

## TREASURES FROM THE RETRO CHEST




TREASURE OF THE MONTH

### Retro Gamer Mugs

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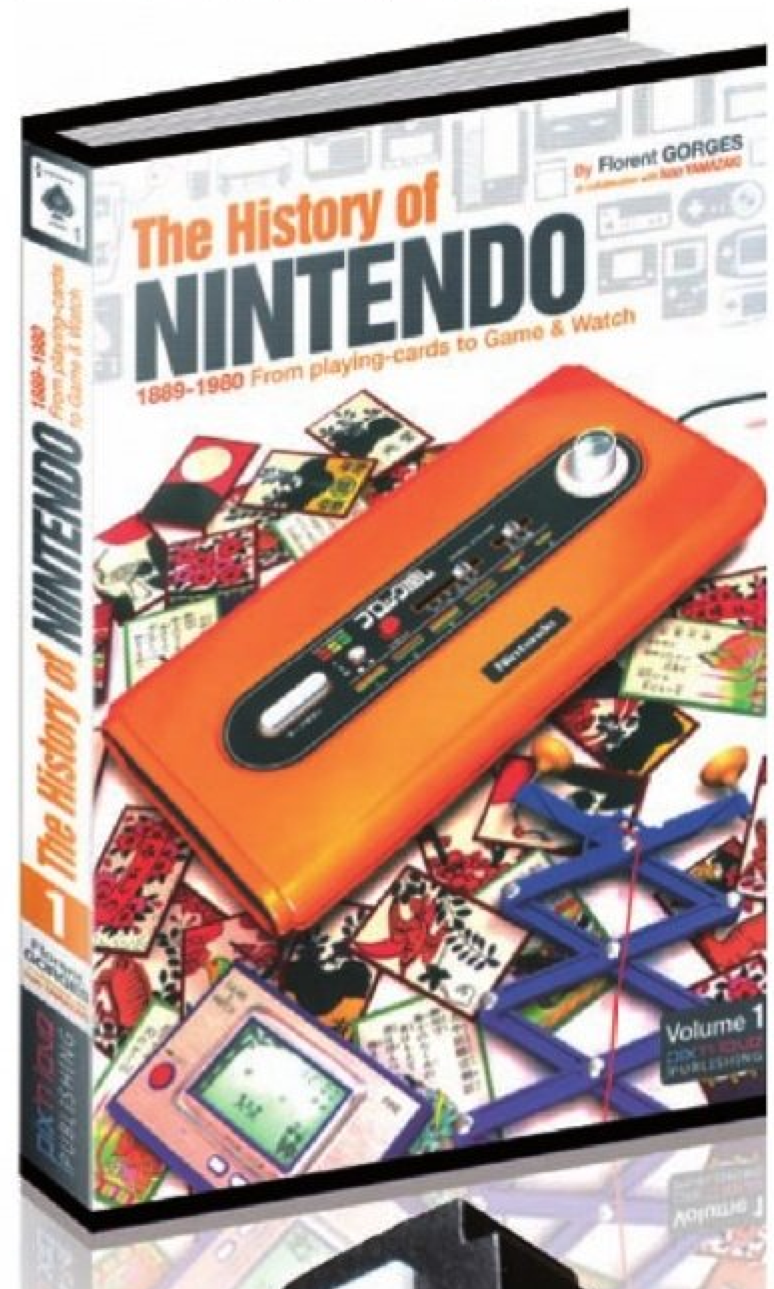
Now you might think it cheeky for us to place a **Retro Gamer** licensed product as treasure this month, but look, we have no principles, and it's our magazine so that gives us absolute power. Power trip aside, we're just really proud that we've been able to create something so cool; so allow us to get on with our sales patter...

Right, then. What better way to show your love of all things retro than by buying one of these limited edition ceramic drinking vessels? They're available in one of four retro designs, seen here, and each mug also comes with a very handy safety handle to help lessen the risk of lap scalding. They even hold a variety of different liguids and beverages. And those of you who don't like hot drinks and are feeling a bit lovelorn needn't worry, as you can always roll your favourite magazine into a paper cylinder and use the mugs as smart tabletop magazine holders.

### The History Of Nintendo: Volume 1

■ **Price:** $25 (approx £16)
■ **From:** www.pixnlovepublishing.com

This exhaustive look back at one of the most influential companies in the videogame industry leaves no stone unturned. It offers a detailed and comprehensive examination of Nintendo, from Hanafuda cards right up to the Game & Watch, and is packed full of wonderful photography. The staggering amount of research by author Florent Gorges, in collaboration with journalist Isao Yamazaki, to produce this fascinating book is evident on every attention-grabbing page. This could be the definitive book on all things Nintendo.









### Jaws T-Shirt

■ **Price:** £19
■ **From:** www.nerdoh.co.uk

Darran got a copy of *Jaws Unleashed* for the PS2 the other day, and as far as great white shark simulators go it is pretty dope. It's kind of like *Grand Theft Auto* meets *Ecco The Dolphin*. Anyway, this fact alone was enough for us to flag up this smart *Jaws* T-shirt this month. It promotes the sun, sea and surf – but not the sharks – of Amity Island, and as a nice touch even displays the regatta dates from the film. So those *Jaws* fans wanting to imagine what it would be like to be an extra in the film can drop £19 to do so.

### 8-Bit Hanger

■ **Price:** $19.99 (approx £12.80)
■ **From:** www.thinkgeek.com

You know those giant foam hands you see people waving in crowds at US sporting events? This isn't one of those; it's a wall-mounted hook in the style of a cursor hand, which can be fastened to soft walls with human strength and a twisting motion. It can be used to hang everyday items like WWII blackout curtains, heated toilet seats and monkey bandanas, and, as a bonus feature, you can also crouch beneath it to imagine what it would be like to be in a side-scrolling beat-'em-up, having just washed a screen of bikers called Brugus and Galavan.




## Grow Your Own Moai Statue (aka DOH)

- **Price:** $5.99 (£4)
- **From:** www.thinkgeek.com

Moai statues are the stone human heads located on Easter Island, Chile. They're basically South America's detached answer to Mount Rushmore. But rather than portray the likenesses of past US presidents, they're carved to resemble a series of interplanetary leaders instead. The most notable being DOH, an unsavoury stone alien ruler who many may remember was immortalised in Taito's acclaimed vandalism sim *Arkanoid*. If you'd like to grow a DOH, you can do so with this handy kit from ThinkGeek. Just be sure to keep rolling pins out of his eyeshot.




## Cassette Tape T-Shirt

- **Price:** £15.95
- **From:** www.retrogt.com

The cassette tape was an iconic storage medium for music and videogames appearing on home computers back in the Eighties, but rarely do you see them these days. Phased out by shiny compact discs, the only places you ever seem to see them now are in motorway service stations. Well, why not help to give cassettes some much-needed exposure by wearing this natty T-shirt from Retro GT and spending your weekends stood inside a game shop, preaching of their brilliance?




## Operation Thunderbolt

- **Price:** £26.99
- **From:** www.rewind-gaming.co.uk

Rewind Gaming continues to impress us with its fine selection of classic, and not so classic, vintage treasures. Falling in the 'not so classic' category this month is this copy of *Operation Thunderbolt* for the ill-fated GX4000 hover board – the reason why this decent sequel falls into the 'not so classic' grouping. As surprising as it might seem to most, there are actually GX4000 collectors out there, and if you're one of them you might like to pay a visit to Rewind Gaming for some rare game fillings.

## TOP FIVE T-SHIRTS



**01** A Miserable Little Pile Of Secrets T-shirt
- **RRP:** $24.99 (approx £16)
- **Buy it from:** meatbun.us/store/



**02** Amstrad
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com



**03** Sonic Power-ups
- **RRP:** $14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

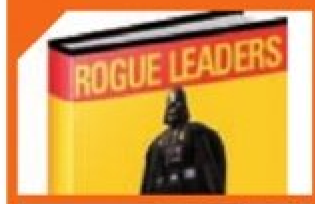


**04** Coexist T-shirt
- **RRP:** $15.99 - $17.99
- **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



**05** Dizzy
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

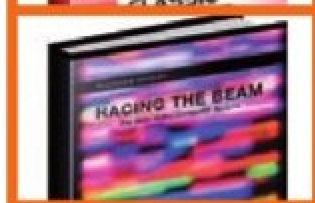
## TOP FIVE BOOKS



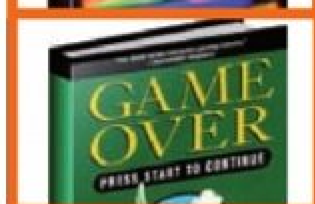
**01** Rogue Leaders: The Story Of LucasArts
- **RRP:** £34.99 ■ **Publisher:** Titan Books
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



**02** Classic Home Video Games 1985-1988 ■ **RRP:** $55 (approx £34)
- **Author:** Brett Weiss
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.com



**03** Racing The Beam
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Publisher:** MIT Press
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



**04** Game Over
- **RRP:** £22.14
- **Publisher:** Cyberactive Media Group
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



**05** Gamespite Quarterly: Issue 3
- **RRP:** From $12 ■ **Author:** Jeremy Parish
- **Buy it from:** www.gamespite.com

## TOP FIVE MISCELLANEOUS



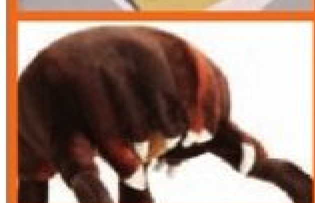
**01** Mega Drive Card Holder
- **RRP:** $34.10 (approx £21)
- **Manufacturer:** Banpresto
- **Buy it from:** www.strapya-world.com



**02** Grow Your Own Moai Statue (aka DOH)
- **RRP:** $5.99 (£4)
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



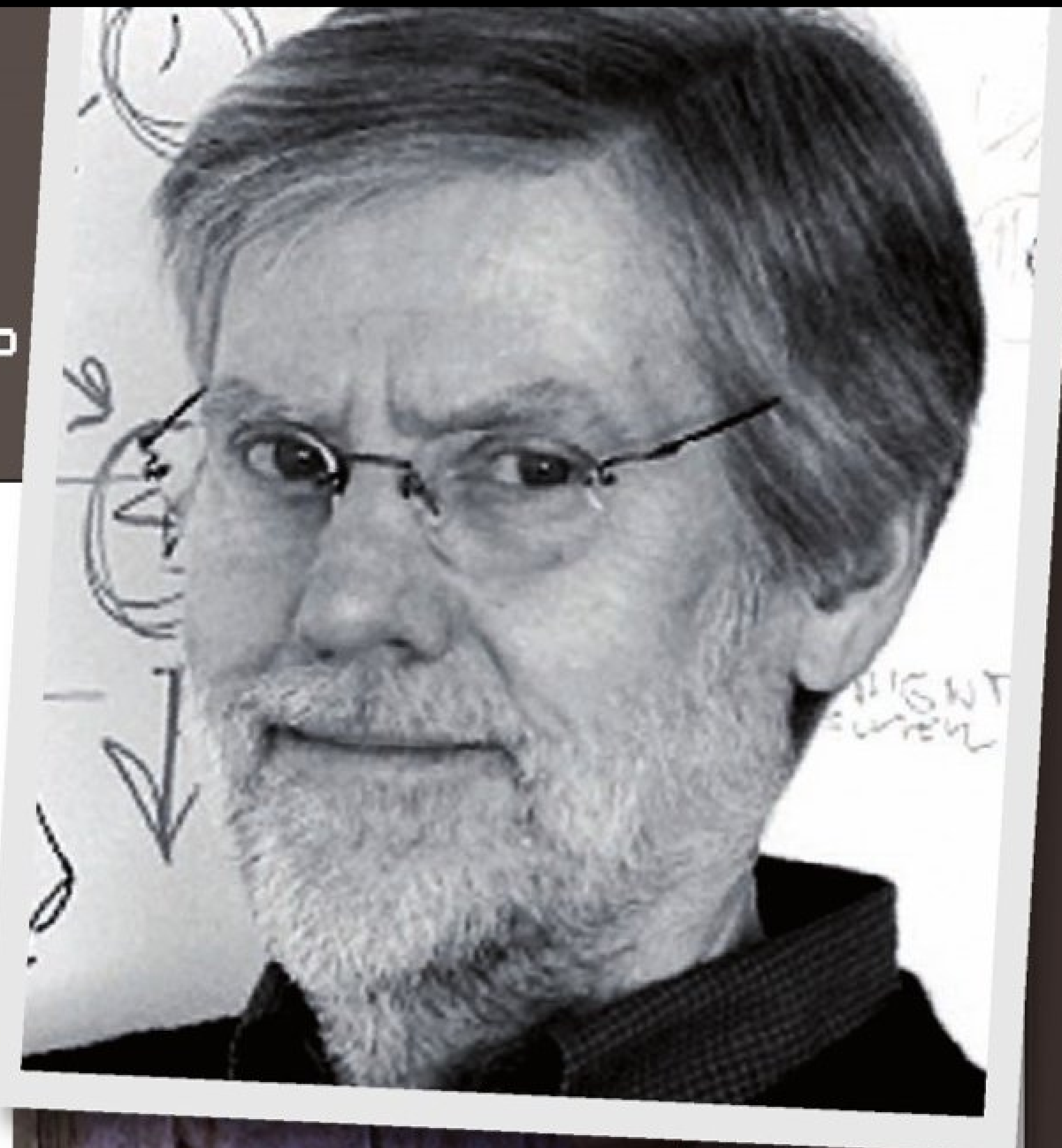
**03** Retro Videogame Propaganda Posters
- **RRP:** £33 ■ **Manufacturer:** Steven Thomas ■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



**04** Headcrab Plushie
- **RRP:** $24.99 (approx £16)
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



**05** Namco Dioramas
- **RRP:** £5
- **Manufacturer:** Namco
- **Buy it from:** www.japantrendshop.com



# *A MOMENT WITH...
# Hal Barwood

Every issue we put an industry veteran in the hotseat. This month, Mike Bevan talks to LucasArts alumnus Hal Barwood

## Who is Hal Barwood?

Hal is probably best known for his LucasArts *Indiana Jones* titles – the classic SCUMM adventure *Fate Of Atlantis*, and the early 3D action game *Infernal Machine*. His most recent graphic adventure, *Mata Hari*, was released earlier this year by Mamba Games.

**Which of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?**
Lots. I still like most of them. *Fate Of Atlantis* is up on Steam, and it's still a terrific adventure. *Big Sky Trooper* is floating around on the web. *Yoda Stories* is out there somewhere. These are all wonderfully playable story games, if you can get over the older look.

**What is your proudest memory of your time in the industry?**
Shipping my games.

**What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?**
I can't go into this without harsh words, so I guess I should just say it's tough to build games. We're still an immature industry, and expertise in every facet of development is in short supply.

**Which industry veteran do you admire the most?**
Like many others, Shigeru Miyamoto.

**How would you like your games to be remembered?**
By playing them! With emulators these days, I guess.

**Which game do you wish you'd made, and why?**
My *Star Wars* point-and-click adventure, *The New Emperor*. I think C-3PO would have made a perfect adventure game leading man.

**What opportunities has working in the videogame industry given you?**
I got to fulfil the fantasy of making games and meet a lot of my best friends.

**What's your best memory of being in the videogame industry?**
It's difficult to choose, because there have been many high points. Shipping *Big Sky Trooper* stands out, because that cute little console title cost me three years of misery. *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* winning the UK *PC Zone* Action-Adventure Game of the Year award in 1999 was nice too. Working on what I love to do every day is a pleasant blur.

**Can you share an interesting anecdote with us from your time in the industry?**
Once, a few years ago, I was called upon to deliver a talk at the annual New Paradigms in User Computing conference at IBM, on the topic of game controllers. The serious research world reaching out to us goofy gamers and all. I thought my contrarian views would be bracing, so I proceeded to lecture the audience on how conservative people are. We still use steering wheels on automobiles, and despite many attempts to promote changes, we've been typing on QWERTY keyboards for 150 years. So why would anyone expect new controllers to appear to play games? I boldly predicted that keyboards and hand controllers would continue unchanged away into the misty future. Ha. Look what happened: the Wii, the DS, the iPad, Xbox Kinect, PS Move and Win 7 multitouch have arrived. Still no flying cars to commute in, but damn, it sure is easy to be wrong on technology.

**How has the industry changed in the last 20 years?**
Let me count the ways. No, don't. There are too many! First the bad news: until the mid-Nineties almost any published game could make money. That promoted a lot of variety and innovation. Then, costs rose almost exponentially and we became a hit-driven business, leading to risk-averse conformity, a lot of indifferent licensed 'product', and turmoil and failure for a lot of studios. Next some better news: the advent of internet connectivity changed everything, leading to games like *World Of Warcraft* and *Club Penguin*, among many others. Finally, the rise of casual games has had a liberating effect on design and introduced enormous numbers of people to the wonderful world of games. And for the future? I'm hopeful, but wary. *



» *Mata Hari* features exquisite period visuals, and a script by Hal and *Fate Of Atlantis* co-designer Noah Falstein.







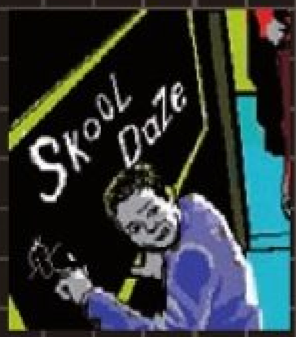
» [PC] *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* remains a thrilling and hugely entertaining graphic adventure.



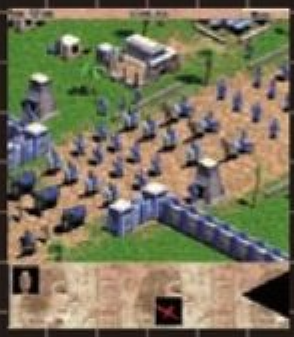
15 October – 11 November

# retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present




**15 October 1984**
■ Microsphere lets its school-based arcade adventure and Eric loose on the Spectrum-owning population. *Skool Daze* is born.



**15 October 1997**
■ Microsoft Games publishes *Age Of Empires* in the USA. It was the first in the historical strategy gaming series.




**15 October 2010**
■ The next instalment of the *Medal Of Honor* series will be released in the UK on the PS3 and Xbox 360. Welcome to Tier 1…



**16 October 1981**
■ Atari's classic coin-op tube-shooter *Tempest* arrives in the arcades. Mind those spikers!




**17 October 1985**
■ The first issue of Newsfield Publications' Amstrad-specific magazine, *Amtix*, hits the newsstands.



**19 October 1984**
■ Originally called *Star Burst*, Real Time renames its *Star Wars*-inspired game *3D Starstrike*, and a retro classic was created.




**19 October 1994**
■ Mega Drive owners begin wetting themselves in anticipation as *Sonic & Knuckles* is finally released.




**21 October 2005**
■ Family gaming fun abounds – with added arguments and tantrums – with the UK release of *The Music Quiz*, the first in the PS2 *Buzz!* series.




**22-23 Oct 2010**
■ Blizzard Entertainment's own BlizzCon, the fifth annual celebration of its games, is to be held in California.




**23 October 1998**
■ *Spyro The Dragon* makes his videogaming debut in the UK on the PlayStation.



**26 October 2007**
■ Xbox 360 owners got to play *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Anniversary* for the first time with its official UK release.



**26 October 2010**
■ Namco Bandai is set to release *Splatterhouse* on the Xbox 360 and PS3. Expect buckets of blood.




**29 October 2004**
■ Rockstar North releases the controversial but utterly excellent *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on the PlayStation 2 in the UK.



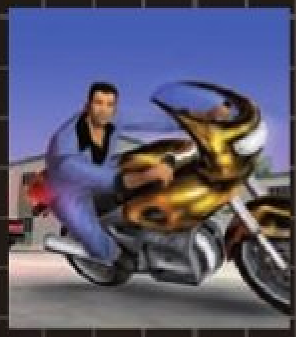
**2 Nov 2010**
■ A retro classic is re-imagined when Activision releases *GoldenEye 007* on the Wii, with Daniel Craig as Bond.



**5 November 1976**
■ *F-1*, Atari's first and only projector coin-op arcade game, is released. It is also the first game Atari licensed from Namco.



**7 November 2008**
■ Activision brings *Guitar Hero: World Tour* to the UK on the Wii, PS3 and Xbox 360 for all you droogies, boozers and strumpets.



**8 November 2002**
■ There is yet more *Grand Theft Auto* when *Vice City* goes on sale in the UK on the PS2.



**9 November 2001**
■ *Project Gotham Racing* makes its worldwide debut in the US of A on the Xbox.



**11 November 2006**
■ The PlayStation 3 goes on sale in Japan. America got to see it six days later and the UK a further four months on.




**11 Nov 2010**
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

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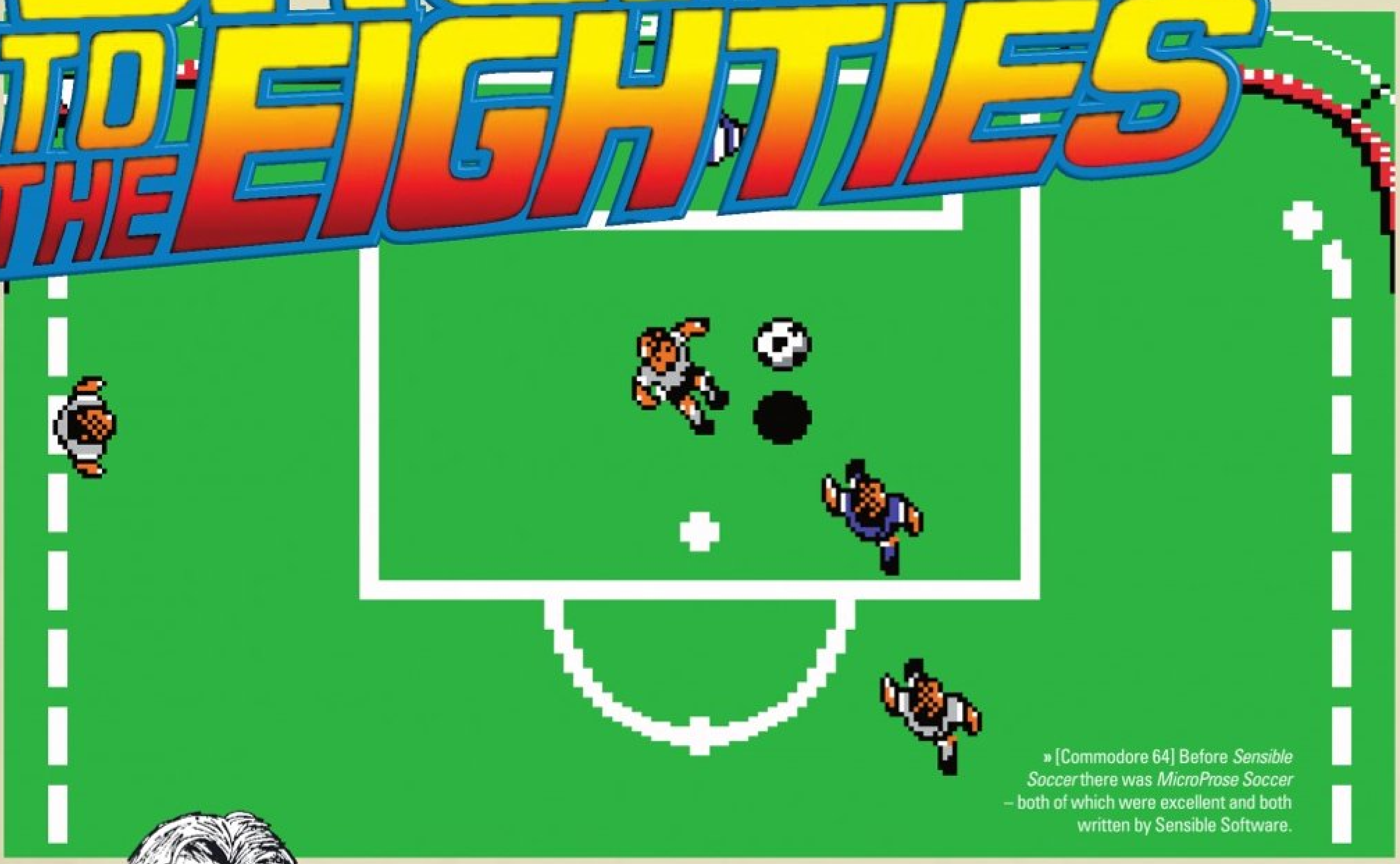



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# BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



» [Commodore 64] Before *Sensible Soccer* there was *MicroProse Soccer* – both of which were excellent and both written by Sensible Software.

## CHARTS

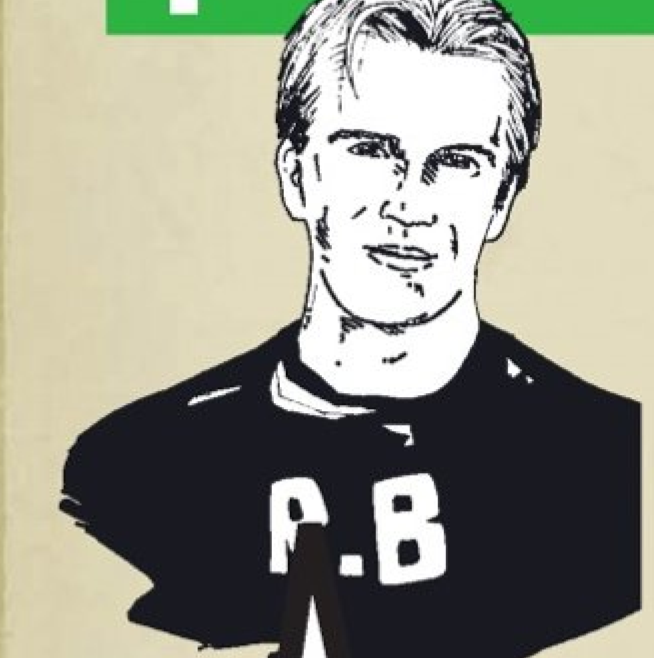
### NOV 1988



| AMSTRAD | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Airwolf (Encore) |
| 2 | ATV Simulator (Codemasters) |
| 3 | Battleships (Encore) |
| 4 | Stunt Bike Simulator (Codemasters) |
| 5 | Football Manager 2 (Addictive) |

» [PC] *Atic Atac* comes to the Atari ST. No, actually, this is a remake by Richard Jordan of Retrospec for the PC.





**NOVEMBER 1988 – Coupe coming, Spectrum going, Purple patch for ERE, Codemasters gives Alternative ultimatum, Thunder Blade looking sharp, Chrysalis hatches Ultimate conversions while Melbourne House revisits Middle-earth**

# THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1988

**There was finally some good news for followers of Miles Gordon Technology and its eagerly awaited SAM Coupé. MGT announced that the machine would be previewed at the end of November at its offices and would officially be unveiled at the exotically named Northern Wireless Fair in Blackpool on 31 January. Would there still be a market for the Coupé by then, though?**

Problems were brewing for Amstrad and its Spectrum range this month. It started badly with the news that one of the Spectrum's major stockists, WH Smith, would stop carrying the Spectrum range completely in favour of the Atari ST. Not good news just before Christmas…

Things got worse for Amstrad, which appeared to have made an error in the production of its machines after what appeared to be a cost-saving exercise. As a by-product of its +3 disk-based Spectrum not selling hugely well, Amstrad was reported to have a hefty surplus of +3 circuit boards remaining. It decided to make use of these by incorporating them into the top-selling Spectrum +2.

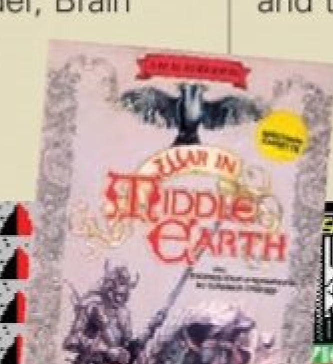
So with that decision, the Spectrum +2A was born. Appearance-wise it was identical to the Spectrum +2 apart from the case being black instead of grey. This circuit board switcheroo meant that a parallel printer port became included, but unfortunately Amstrad engineers hadn't changed the pin-outs on the I/O expansion port, which led to a number of incompatibility issues with the Spectrum +2A and various third-party interfaces.

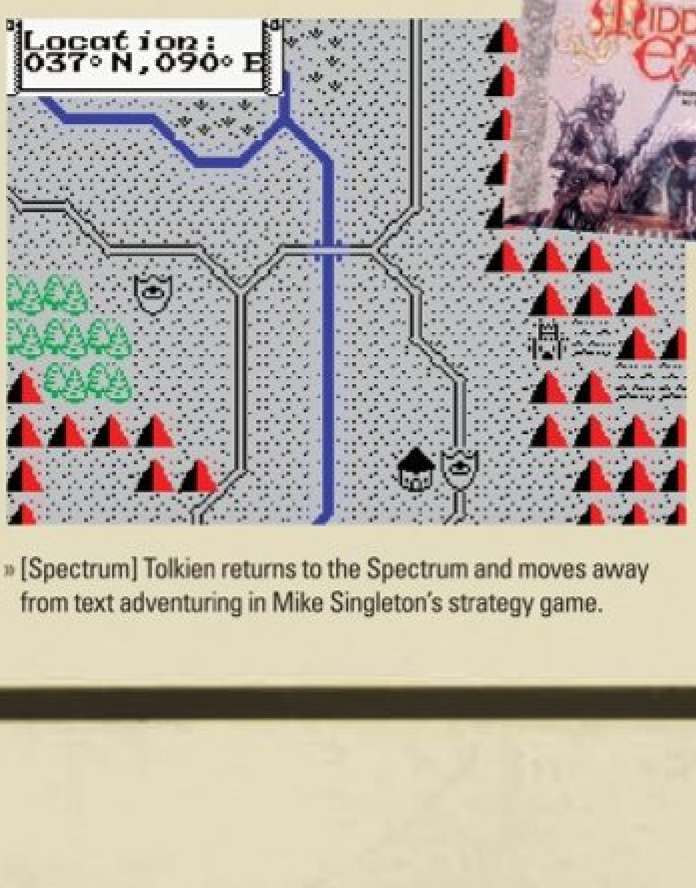
With the recent success of its graphically lovely *Captain Blood* still drawing in impressive sales, French developer ERE Informatique and publisher Exxos used the good press to reveal that their latest game would be out in the new year.

*Purple Saturn Day* would be a galactic Olympics played out on the rings of Saturn and involving a quartet of futuristic sporting events: Ring Pursuit, Tronic Slider, Brain Bowler and Time Jump. Once again the graphics stood out and the varied events made for a well-received game by the reviewers. However, Amiga, ST, Amstrad and Spectrum gamers would have the decisive final word…

In a strange turn of events, Codemasters was demanding answers from Alternative Software regarding the packaging of its game *Formula Grand Prix*, which Codemasters thought bore a resemblance to its own *Grand Prix Simulator* release – meaning both had pictures of racing cars on them. To be fair, they both featured red cars with both sporting the number 27.

Codemasters complained that its ideas and strategies were being widely copied and that it needed to protect its intellectual property. Ironically, it wasn't many moons ago that Codemasters' own *Grand Prix Simulator* was lambasted

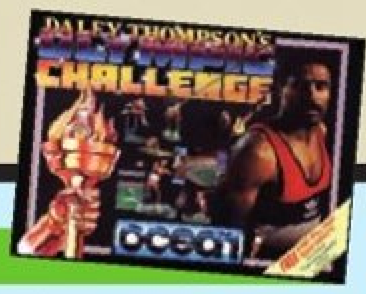





» [Spectrum] Tolkien returns to the Spectrum and moves away from text adventuring in Mike Singleton's strategy game.




» [Spectrum] *The Exploding Fist* is back but not quite as lethal as it was the first time around…







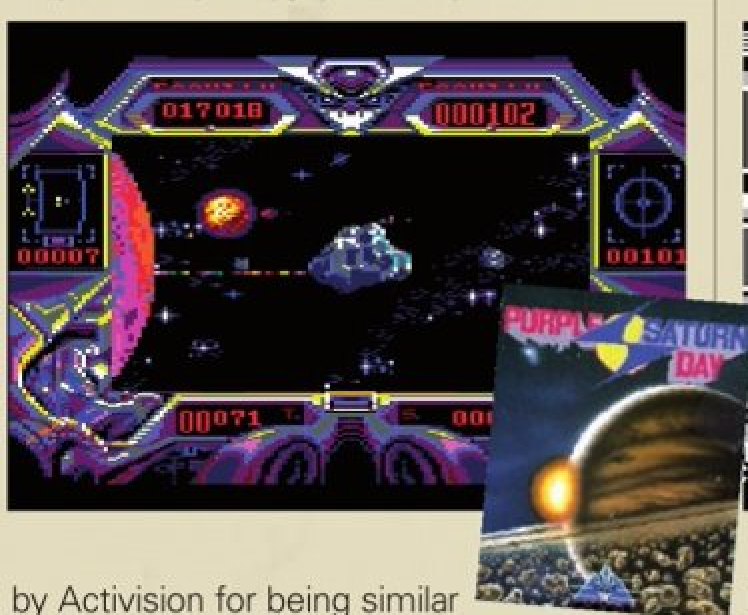



| SPECTRUM | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge (Ocean) |
| 2 | Football Manager 2 (Addictive) |
| 3 | Bomb Jack (Encore) |
| 4 | Airwolf (Encore) |
| 5 | RoadBlasters (US Gold) |

| COMMODORE 64 | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Barbarian II (Palace Software) |
| 2 | Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge (Ocean) |
| 3 | Tracksuit Manager (Goliath Games) |
| 4 | Bomb Jack (Encore) |
| 5 | Football Manager 2 (Addictive) |

| MUSIC | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The First Time (Robin Beck) |
| 2 | Stand Up For Your Love Rights (Yazz) |
| 3 | Orinoco Flow (Enya) |
| 4 | Need You Tonight (INXS) |
| 5 | Je Ne Sais Pas Porquoi (Kylie Minogue) |

» [Amstrad CPC] For a galactic Olympiad look no further than *Purple Saturn Day*. Pretty graphics but only four events.




» [Commodore 64] The 8-bit versions of *Thunder Blade* were arguably more playable than the prettier 16-bit efforts.




by Activision for being similar to its own game, the conversion of the arcade coin-op favourite *Super Sprint*.

Coming very soon, reportedly before Christmas, was the arcade conversion of *Thunder Blade*, the helicopter shoot-'em-up that had been mooted as the greatest arcade conversion since *OutRun*, which wasn't saying a lot. Various formats were to receive versions, including the Mega Drive, Master System, Amiga and Spectrum.

Would the lack of hydraulic cabinet and computing power make for a less than fantastic experience when it finally hit the shops? Strangely the 8-bit versions, particularly Spectrum and Commodore 64, were far more playable than any of the console or 16-bit versions, despite their lack of power and graphical limitations.

There was interesting news for Atari ST owners who had previously upgraded from a Spectrum. A new software house called Chrysalis was apparently working on 16-bit conversions of Ultimate Play The Game favourites *Atic Atac* and *Sabre Wulf*, with a release date envisaged for March.

It also revealed that it had signed a deal with IPC Magazines to release a game based on the blue-skinned *2000 AD* genetic infantryman *Rogue Trooper*. A rather lacklustre *Rogue Trooper* game had already been released by the liquidated software house Piranha, but the Chrysalis version was promised to be a completely different animal. It and the two Ultimate games certainly were – they were never released.

Melbourne House was once again delving into Tolkien territory for its latest project, *War In Middle Earth*. With three Tolkien adventures in its back catalogue already, including the retro-gaming legend *The Hobbit*, the emphasis this time was on the strategy and war-gaming element rather than text adventure. With a release date of February '89, the chance to re-enact the Middle-earth battles and take on Sauron's hordes wasn't far away for the popular 8- and 16-bit computers.

Beam Software, which had developed *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* for Melbourne House, had finished writing *Fist +* for the Spectrum and C64. Although retaining the graphics style of the original, the gameplay tried to emulate *International Karate +*, and although it wasn't an unlikable game when released on the Firebird label, it wasn't as engaging as the original *Exploding Fist* or *IK+*.

It was a goodbye and fond farewell to *Atari User* by Database Publications. After 43 issues the magazine would be incorporated into the other illustrious Atari magazine, *Page 6*. But with one magazine slipping away, another appeared to take its place. The first issue of *New Computer Express*, a weekly magazine by Future Publishing, appeared in early November.

*Computer & Video Games* reviewers had a good crop to rate this month, giving several high overall percentage scores with *R-Type* (Electric Dreams, Spectrum), *Elite* (Firebird, Atari ST), *Power Drome* (Electronic Arts, Atari ST), *Pac-Mania* (Grand Slam, Spectrum), *Nebulus* (Hewson, Amiga), *Speed Ball* (Image Works, Amiga), *Soldier Of Fortune* (Firebird, Spectrum) and *Ingrid's Back* (Level 9, Amiga) all doing well.

However, *CVG*'s overall Game of the Month was *MicroProse Soccer* (MicroProse, C64). On me 'ead, son!

## NOVEMBER 1988 NEWS



» The Soviets had a Shuttle programme. Sadly it lasted about as long as a game of *Phoenix* on the Atari 2600 does.

15 November saw the first and only launch of the Soviet Union's Space Shuttle. The Buran looked very similar to its American counterpart, although for its inaugural flight it was unmanned as the life support systems were untested.

It orbited the Earth twice before returning and landing in a completely automated procedure. Sadly, the Buran project was suspended shortly afterwards due to a lack of funds and was completely shut down in 1993.

Meanwhile, 22 November saw the USA unveil its latest technological advancement: the B-2 Spirit, otherwise known as the stealth bomber, rolled out of its hangar in Palmdale, California. Its first flight wasn't until July.

The bombers could launch conventional and nuclear weapons and, with their distinctive design, were capable of evading defences with greatly reduced signatures. Only 21 have been built, which is not surprisingly considering that they cost $1.5 billion a pop.

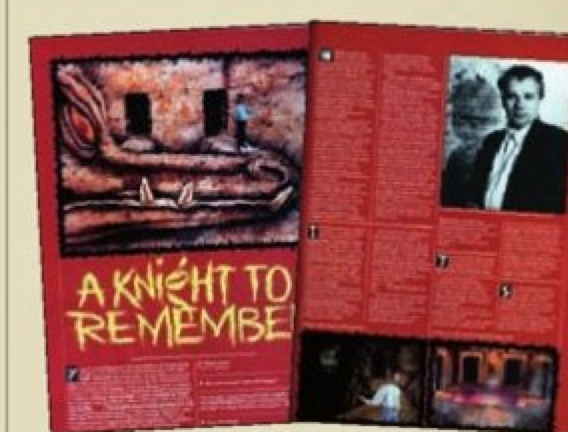
9 November saw the world premiere of *Child's Play*, which would introduce the psycho doll Chucky to an unsuspecting audience. A dying murderer uses voodoo to transfer his soul into the doll. When the doll is given as a birthday present, death and mayhem shortly follow. It developed a following and, unsurprisingly, sequels followed…

# THIS MONTH IN…

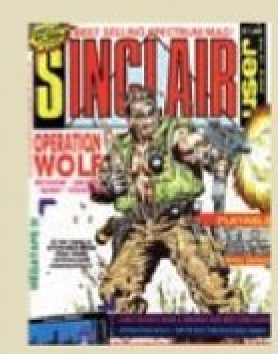
## ZZAP!64



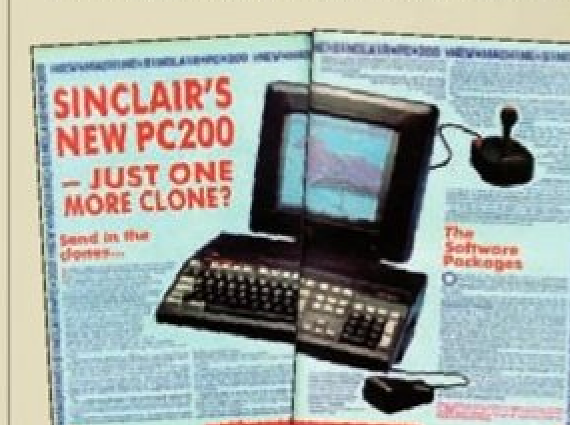
*Zzap!* assessed the technology used on the kids' TV game show *Knightmare*. The master behind the graphics was Robert Harris, or rather his skills and the power of his 24-bit Spaceward Supernova computer. Yours for just £85,000… but could it run *Manic Miner*?




## SINCLAIR USER




*SU* cast an eye over Amstrad's new baby, the Sinclair PC200. The IBM-compatible machine was marketed as a serious machine but with great gaming capabilities. Sadly, it was not very good at either and, for £330, the ST or Amiga was a much better option.

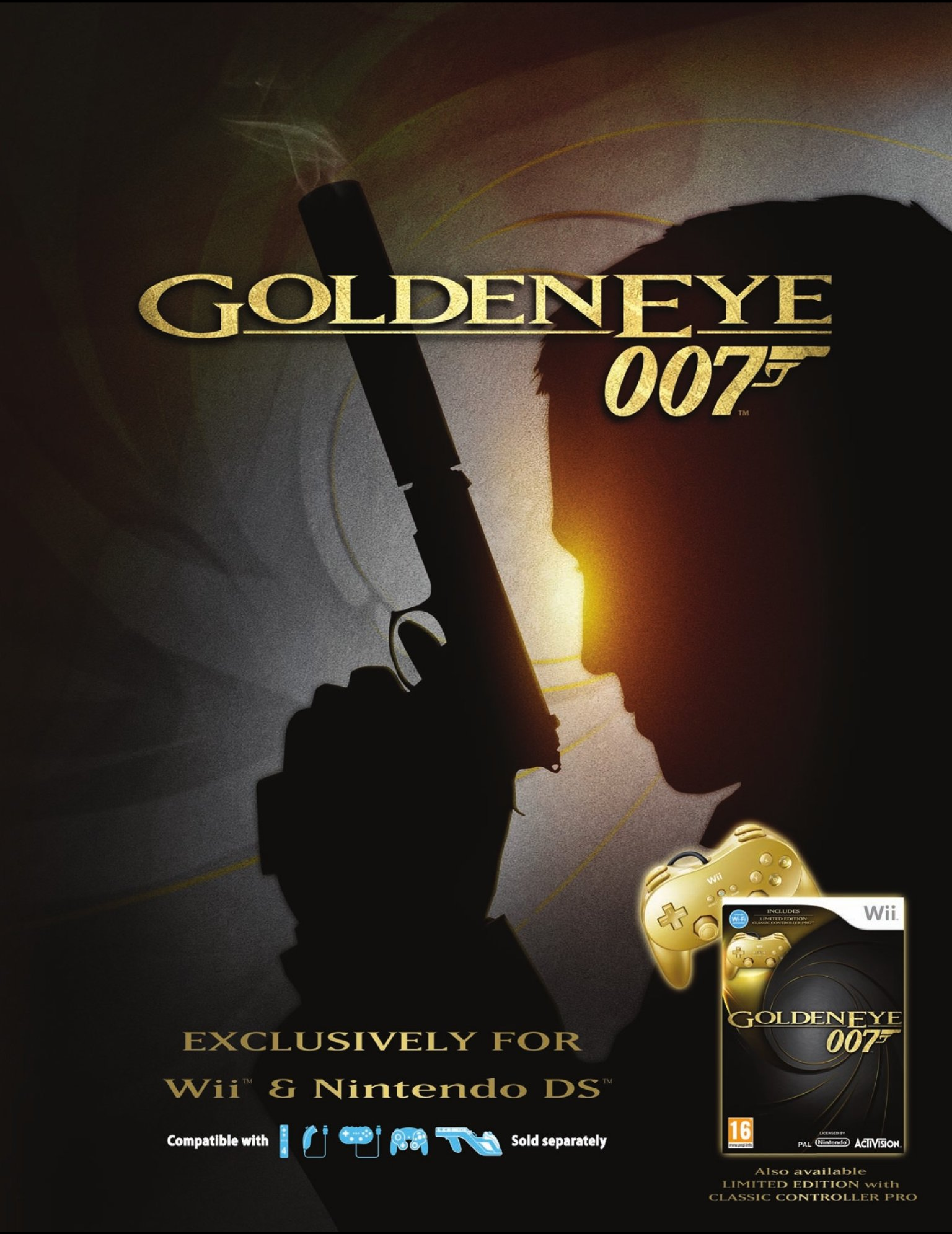



## AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER




*ACU* spoke to David Perry of Probe Software about his past projects and his latest game, *Savage*. It had similarities to *Trantor*, which Perry readily admitted that he had "borrowed" from.




GOLDENEYE
007
EXCLUSIVELY FOR
Wii & Nintendo DS
Compatible with
Sold separately
Wii
GOLDENEYE
007
ACTIVISION
Also available
LIMITED EDITION with
CLASSIC CONTROLLER PRO

# BACK TO THE NINETIES




» [SNES] *Starwing* was selling like hot cakes… and we love hot cakes. Any cakes, in fact…

» [Mega Drive] It's *Wayne's World*, party time, load of crud, bag of pants, not that good, chuck in the bin, excellent!



» [Master System] Love him or hate him, Dizzy sells games. Now on consoles, the future looks sunny side up for Codemasters.









# THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1993

**MAY 1993 – Wayne's World arrives, Ripley goes Alien-bashing, Star Trek franchise regenerated, Bullfrog starts a Syndicate, Mario Is Missing, Dizzy gets cracking on consoles and Zool not so sweet in the arcade. Richard Burton sticks 50p in the slot…**

**With the movie raking in cash at the cinema for over a year, it came as no surprise to learn that *Wayne's World* would soon be converted from silver screen to console monitor via publisher THQ.**

So would SNES, NES, Game Boy and Mega Drive owners be partying on at this excellent tie-in offering? Well, if exceedingly awkward controls, useless collision detection rendering the game pointless, and monotonous gameplay are what you're looking for in a scrolling platform game, then you'll love it. Not.

But wait… there's another *Wayne's World* game? Schwing! Capstone released a point-and-click adventure for PC DOS that found Wayne and Garth searching for objects and subjects for their cable TV show. It was more interesting and entertaining than the *Wayne's World* of the platform variety, but was still not a game you would rush out and buy.

Another big movie getting converted was *Alien 3* by Acclaim. The side-scrolling shoot-'em-up/prisoner-rescuing game featuring the slap-headed Ripley was reputed to be ready for release for the SNES, and early indications were that it was going to be superb. When it was released, the first wave of reviews backed this up, agreeing that it was an outstanding shooter.

There was more top-notch shooting action with Irem's release of *R-Type II* on the Game Boy. Having had a successful release on the Amiga and Atari ST, the monochromatic handheld got its own cut-down version, which was quite accomplished.

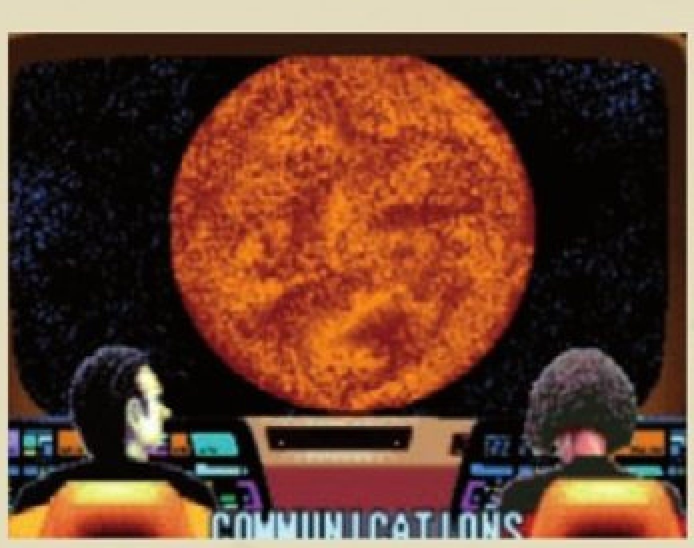
Spectrum Holobyte was beavering away on the development of a Mega Drive and SNES game to tie in with the TV show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In fact, by the time it was eventually released there were two different versions of the game, the Mega Drive having *Echoes From The Past* and the SNES having *Future's Past*.

Both games were arcade adventures with strong RPG elements. Although the graphics were very good in both cases, the games were trying too hard to be like a single episode of the TV show and suffered for it. Good, but not warp speed…

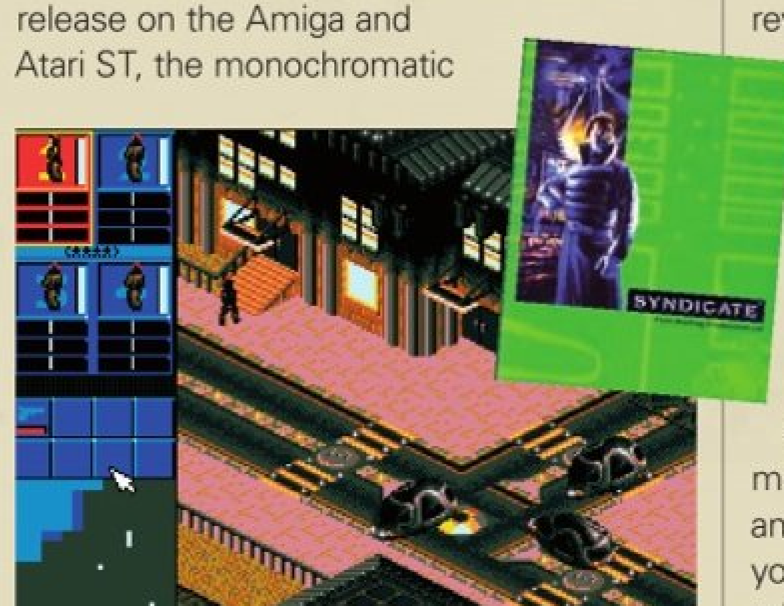
Peter Molyneux of Bullfrog Productions revealed that *Syndicate*, which had been under development for three years, was expected to be released within weeks. With that much development time you would hope for something quite special, and *Syndicate* was.

The game is a territorial struggle between power-hungry corporations in a bleak futuristic world. Yep – essentially a strategy game but with so much more. The wanton destruction of anything and anybody is as gratuitous as it gets as you tool up your androids to lay waste to whatever you fancy.

You can enter every building on the huge isometric playing area, you can ride on




» [SNES] In *Future's Past*, the crew encounter a planet consisting of one giant-sized ginger nut. Dunk Factor 9, Captain.




» [Amiga] A perfect blend of strategy and shoot-'em-up brought to you by Bullfrog Productions. Arguably its best game ever.

# CHARTS

## MAY 1993 NEWS



» Living the same day over and over again. Not unlike watching *Big Brother*…

1 May saw the death of the French Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, who committed suicide. He had lost an election by a landslide and was also being investigated for taking a 1 million franc interest-free loan from a businessman. His wife expressed doubt as to whether it was actually suicide. He hadn't left a note, the notebook he always carried was missing, and he had suffered two gunshots to the head…

1 May was not a good day for politicians: President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was assassinated by a suicide bomber affiliated to the Tamil Tigers.

On a cheerier note, 7 May saw the UK premiere of *Groundhog Day*, starring Bill Murray as a weatherman living the same day over and over again. According to the director and fellow Ghostbuster, Harold Ramis, the time duration passed during the movie was approximately ten years, giving a copious amount of time for Phil to learn the error of his ways, become a better person and finally break the repetition.



» It's-a me, Cockney Mario! Cor blimey, this Watford Gap was in a right old two and eight.

28 May saw the premiere of another movie: *Super Mario Bros* starring Bob Hoskins as Mario, John Leguizamo as Luigi, and Dennis Hopper as King Koopa. It was derided and bombed at the box office.

trains then blow them up, you can interact with every aspect of the environment… basically what we have is the germination of an idea that could well have sprouted into *Grand Theft Auto*. Amiga owners were in for a treat. An excellent PC DOS version was also available, and a slightly less impressive Mega Drive version followed.

Coming soon to Europe on the NES was a *Mario* game released by Nintendo but, unusually, developed by a third-party, Software Toolworks. The game was *Mario Is Missing!*, in which Luigi was cast as the protagonist intent on rescuing his older sibling from Bowser's clutches as well as saving the planet from a plot to melt Antarctica with hairdryers. Yes, seriously.

*Mario Is Missing!* was a rarity in being a geography-based educational game that was also reasonably fun to play. However, it was strictly one for the youngsters.

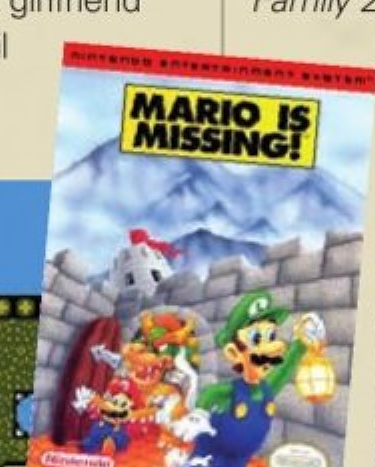
Codemasters revealed that its money-spinning eggy franchise, *Dizzy*, would soon be making its first appearance on the console gaming scene. *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* would see your little ovoid friend trying to rescue his girlfriend Daisy from the hands of the evil wizard Zaks.

It was the *Dizzy* everyone knew and loved, with the usual arcade-adventure and puzzle elements. While the graphics never really made use of the extra console power, the gameplay was as delightful as ever. With NES, Mega Drive, Game Gear and Master System versions being readied for release, it would be interesting to see if it could re-create the magic that made the *Dizzy* franchise one of the most lucrative on the 8-bit home computers.

Gremlin Graphics had some interesting news regarding its platform game *Zool*. Having signed a deal with Bell Fruit Manufacturing, they would combine to release something of a rarity: a computer-to-coin-op conversion. Gremlin envisaged the *Zool* coin-op would be ready for late summer. Although it did indeed make it to the arcades, *Zool* failed to capture the imagination and cash of arcade dwellers.

*N-Force* cogitated and rated the latest Nintendo releases with some of the highest-rated games being *Star Fox* (Nintendo, SNES), *Alfred Chicken* (Mindscape, Game Boy), *The Addams Family 2: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* (Ocean, SNES), *The Empire Strikes Back* (Ubisoft, Game Boy), and *Noah's Ark* (Konami, NES).

Mega Drive owners also had a fine selection box of games to choose from, with the best of the best being *Global Gladiators* (Virgin, Game Gear), *James Bond: The Duel* (Domark, Mega Drive), *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* (Sega/Icom, Mega-CD), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Hyperstone Heist* (Konami, Mega Drive), *Sewer Shark* (Sony, Mega-CD) and *Mutant League Football* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive).






» [NES] Educational game, you say? That's got to be a pile of pap? Although aimed at youngsters, it played rather well.

## THIS MONTH IN…

### MEAN MACHINES SEGA



There was unrestrained joy from the reviewers for Electronic Arts' fantastic *Jungle Strike*. With more levels, more variety and several aircraft to master, it scored 96% and was called the best Mega Drive shoot-'em-up ever.



### N-FORCE



The barcode gaming craze continued, with *N-Force* summarising the Barcode Battler from Epoch and Namcot's Barcode Boy. Although excited about this new gaming phenomenon, a note of caution was raised that the trend may not make the cultural leap from Japan to the UK…




### SEGA FORCE



Just 16 months after its Japanese release, the UK edition of the Sega Mega-CD was finally launched. On the upside, the games that were available looked great and future developments looked promising. The downside was the £279.99 price tag on top of the price of a Mega Drive.



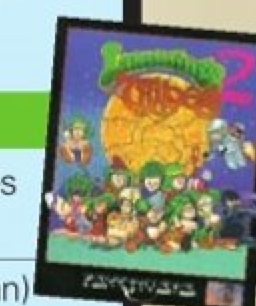
## MAY 1993

### SNES



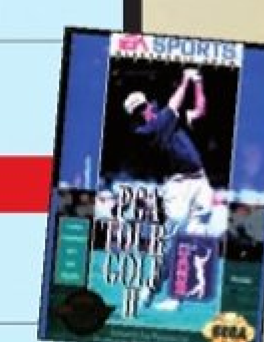
1 Super Mario Kart (Nintendo)
2 Prince Of Persia (Konami)
3 Pilotwings (Nintendo)
4 Mario Paint (Nintendo)
5 Looney Tunes: Road Runner (Sunsoft)

### AMIGA



1 Lemmings 2: Tribes (Psygnosis)
2 Sleepwalker (Ocean)
3 Alien Breed: Special Edition (Team17)
4 Premier Manager (Gremlin Graphics)
5 Street Fighter II (US Gold)

### MEGA DRIVE



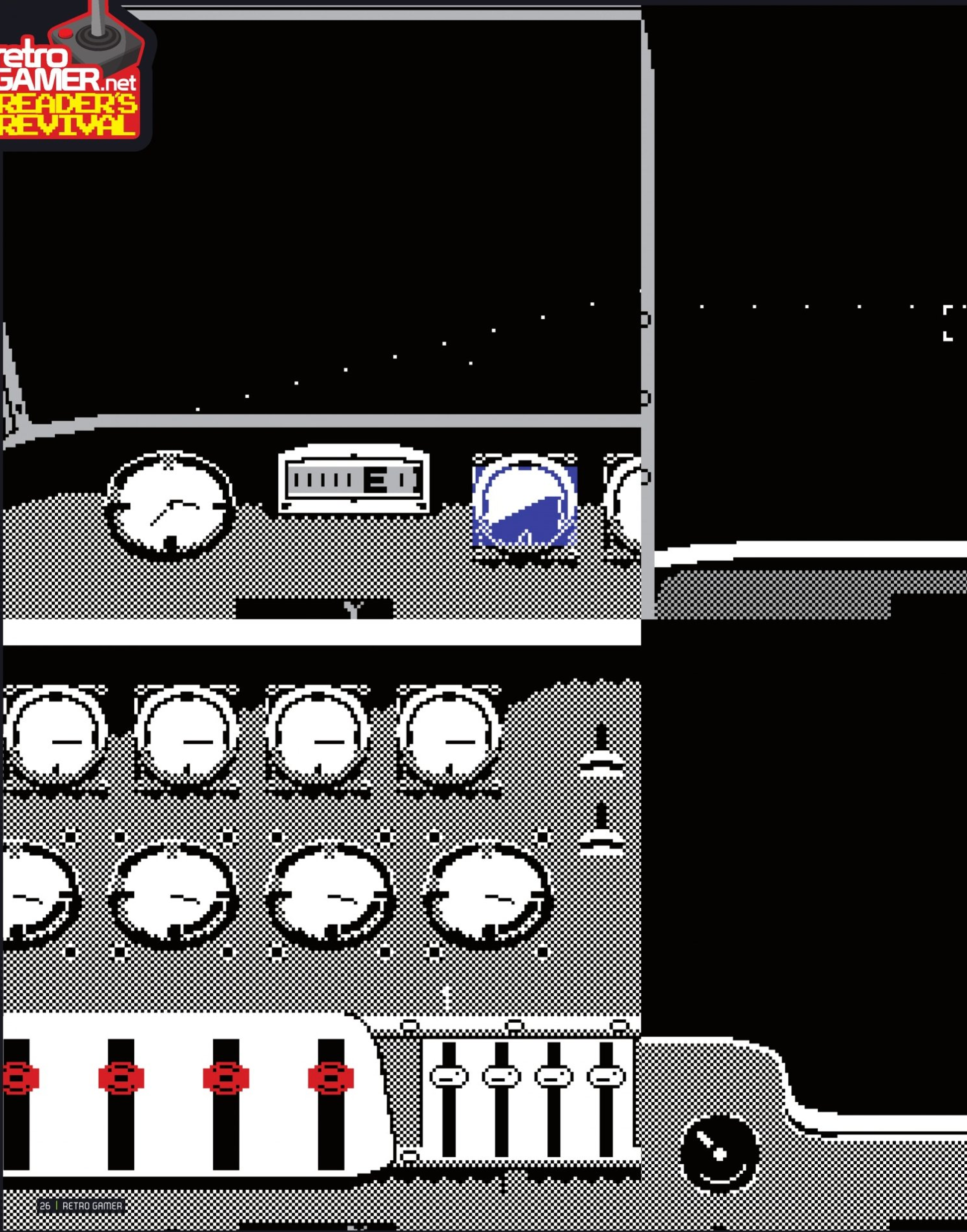
1 PGA Golf Tour II (Electronic Arts)
2 Road Rash 2 (Electronic Arts)
3 Lemmings (Psygnosis)
4 Streets Of Rage 2 (Sega)
5 Sonic The Hedgehog 2 (Sega)

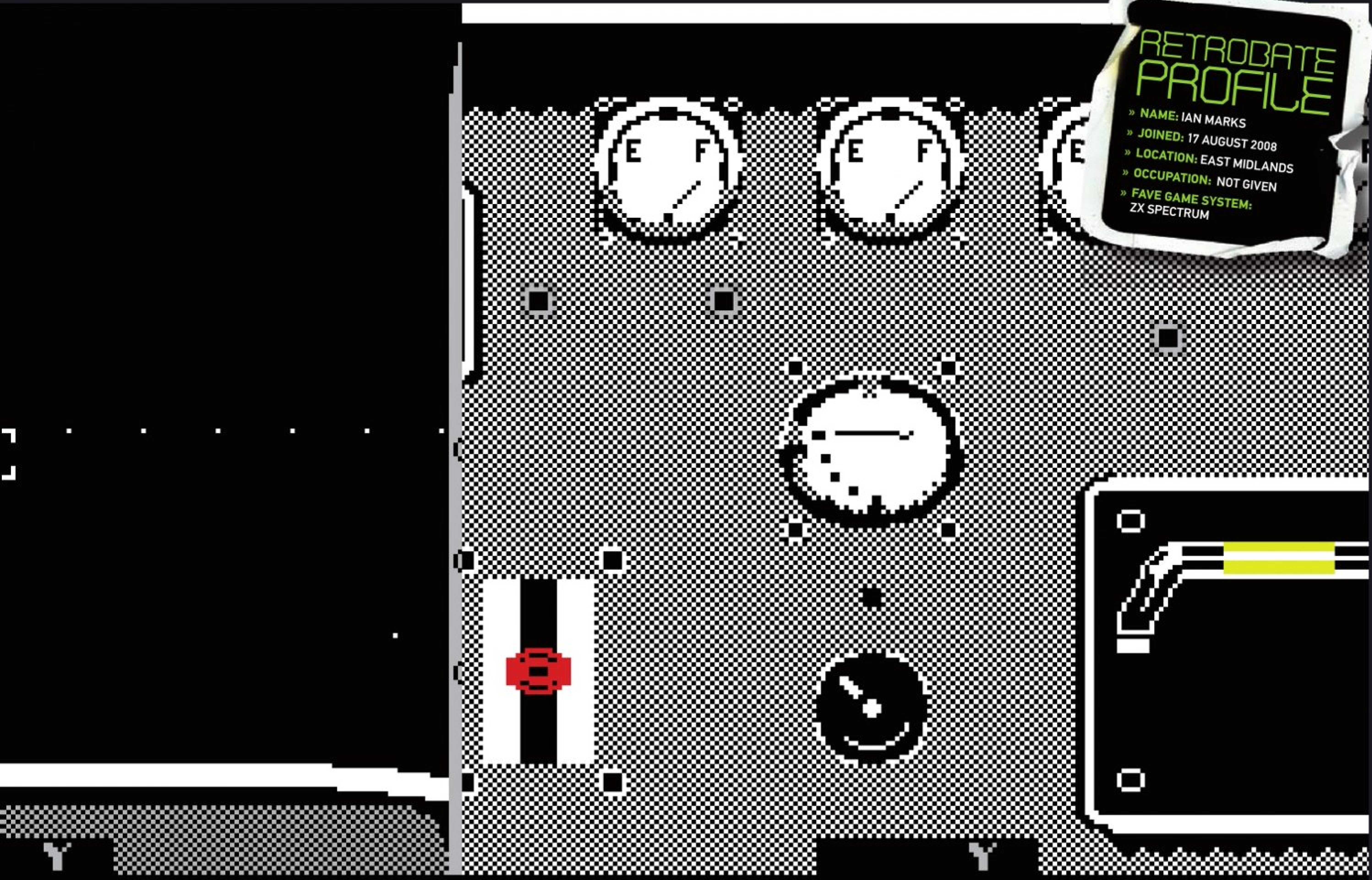
### MUSIC

1 All That She Wants (Ace of Base)
2 Five Live EP (George Michael & Queen with Lisa Stansfield)
3 Sweat (A La La La La Long) (Inner Circle)
4 That's The Way Love Goes (Janet Jackson)
5 Tribal Dance (2 Unlimited)



retroGAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL





RETROBATE PROFILE

» NAME: IAN MARKS
» JOINED: 17 AUGUST 2008
» LOCATION: EAST MIDLANDS
» OCCUPATION: NOT GIVEN
» FAVE GAME SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM

# The Dambusters

## AND THE MOVIE MADE IT LOOK SO EASY

#30




» SPECTRUM ZX
» US GOLD
» 1984

**Dee-dee-dee-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo… that was the *Dambusters* theme. Or was it *633 Squadron*? I can't remember, but I can remember *The Dambusters* for the ZX Spectrum. It was by US Gold and came in a huge box, with a coupon for an Airfix model inside. I never sent off for my kit, and I never got anywhere with the game either, because it was bloody impossible. I'll explain why.**

In *Dambusters* you had to fly a Lancaster bomber to a dam in Germany and then bomb it. The clue was in the name of the game, you see. Inside your bomber there was a gunner, a pilot, a bomb man, a navigator and an engineer.

What made the game so hard was that you had to play the part of the five other people. As you'd expect from a situation like this, things often went wrong. While you were gunning Jerry fighters out of the sky, your altitude was (unbeknownst to you) dropping as no one was flying the plane. As you were lining up your bomb lights, enemy fighters shot you to shreds, because no one was manning the guns. And so it went on.

Dropping a bomb on a dam is obviously supposed to be complicated, and in the film (which must be historically accurate, I'm sure) it took Mr Wallis many attempts to get it right. In the game it took me many attempts and I never got it right – lining up those bouncing bomb lights was a Herculean task.

My main problem was that it took about 30 minutes to fly your plane to the dam (if you weren't shot down first) and then you only had one real chance to get it right, which I didn't. I know what you're thinking, that the real pilots only had one chance, and that is true – but this was only a videogame and I was 12 at the time and very poor at most games.

I seem to remember I enjoyed it, though, and playing it again nowadays I can't really see why. Still a good effort by US Gold, and by all accounts the C64 version was actually quite good.





# MR. VIDEO GAME



## The Complete History of Mario



**To celebrate Mario's 25th year of being 'super', Retro Gamer asks industry legends to offer up their memories of the character, and gives you the complete lowdown on the plumber's career from Popeye replacement to cultural icon**



**To fully appreciate why Mario is still the videogame industry's most recognised, popular and enduring character, you have to look back to the early days of videogames. Mario remains the poster child for a time where everything about them felt fresh, innovative and new, and these newfangled virtual worlds sought only to be linked to ours through the computers and consoles that projected them and the talented visionaries who imagined them. With realism and trends now sitting where fun and creativity once ruled, today's industry is looking a much different place to one that Nintendo was helping rebuild back in the Eighties.**

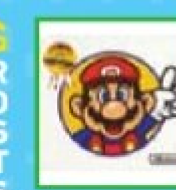
With every familiar-looking sandbox RPG-lite shooter that finds release, it becomes ever apparent that this industry has, in many ways, started to fold in on itself. The insane budgets required to build the games of today mean that now only a small handful of developers and publishers have the financial means to call the shots, game genres seem to be melding together, and despite now being able to utilise gazillions of colours, games are looking a little less colourful. Why the Wii currently stands as the triumphant console of this generation, and *Super Mario Galaxy 2* has scooped universal acclaim, should be obvious to anyone who enjoyed playing videogames throughout the Eighties and Nineties. Nintendo has proven, once again, that fun and creativity are king.

It's for this reason why most gamers can instantly recall the first time they ever saw Mario in action. He takes them back to an evergreen era for videogames, a time with which he has now become synonymous. For many of you reading this, we suspect that your first experience came from playing *Donkey Kong* in arcades, or on home computers and consoles. At this inaugural point in his career, Mario was known by the more literal-sounding name of Jumpman, played a bit of an antihero, and worked as a carpenter instead of the heroic plumber we all know him as today. However, while Mario's personality, name and occupation would come to change quite quickly following his gaming debut in 1981, the distinct look of the character was settled on almost immediately by his creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, and has only really ever been refined, never changed, over the years.

As was the practice in the early days of game design, Mario was borne out from the technical limitations of his time. The character was given his signature flat cap owing to the fact that it would save Miyamoto the headache of animating hair, a large nose to make him look instantly more human, bright red coveralls to help him stand out against *Donkey Kong*'s dark backgrounds, and a moustache instead of a mouth for similar reasons. But Mario's creation also came about through an

## 25 Years Of Super Mario

1985 SUPER MARIO BROS

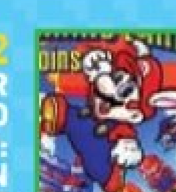

1986 SUPER MARIO BROS THE LOST LEVELS


1988 (USA) SUPER MARIO BROS 2


1988 SUPER MARIO BROS 3


1989 SUPER MARIO LAND


1990 SUPER MARIO WORLD


1992 SUPER MARIO LAND 2: 6 GOLDEN COINS


1995 SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHIS ISLAND


1996 SUPER MARIO 64


2002 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE


2006 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS


2007 SUPER MARIO GALAXY


2009 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS WII


2010 SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2


# MR. VIDEOGAME

# Professions of a Plumber

The versatile hero has appeared in a string of occupational cameos for Nintendo over the years…



**Carpenter**
**Donkey Kong** 1981
■ Mario's first ever job was as a mallet-wielding carpenter in *Donkey Kong*. It's likely that his profession was inspired by the everyman-type scenarios on which Nintendo based many of its Game & Watch titles.



**Plumber**
**Mario Bros** 1983
■ After a two-year stint working as a carpenter, Mario turned his talents to plumbing – as well as the odd bit of pest extermination too – for *Mario Bros*. He kept the role for the subsequent *Super Mario Bros* series.



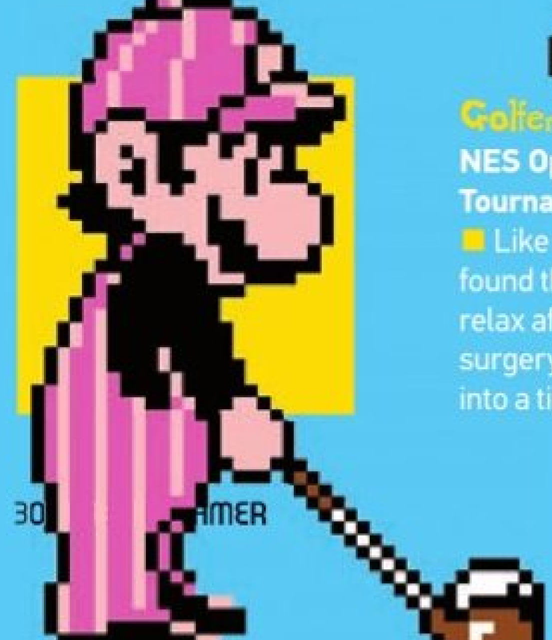
**Umpire**
**Tennis** 1984
■ Mario earned extra cash at weekends working as a tennis umpire. Later in life he decided to take up the sport himself when he realised that more money was to be had playing than interfering.



**Referee**
**Punch-Out!!** 1987
■ Following a successful spell as a tennis umpire, Mario caught the eye of the Nintendo Boxing Commission and was approached to work as a referee in the Famicom/NES version of *Punch-Out!!*.



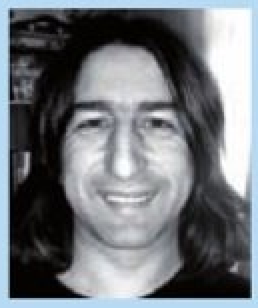
**Doctor**
**Dr Mario** 1990
■ Making a mint working as a boxing ref, Mario left labouring to go to medical school. It took him just two years to complete his doctorate – earning him a place in *Guinness World Records*.



**Golfer**
**NES Open Tournament Golf** 1991
■ Like most doctors, Mario found that the best way to relax after a busy day in surgery was to smash a ball into a tiny hole.



## MARIO MEMORIES



**Jim Bagley**
Classic Spectrum coder
I first saw Mario in the local arcade halls in New Brighton roughly around 1981 when *Donkey Kong* was released. *Donkey Kong* is and always will be a classic, and a great game to boot, but I can't help but admire so many other *Mario* games. *Super Mario Bros* is another fantastic *Mario* game that even to this day I like to play – even though my nephew completed it before I did! And what favourite *Mario* list would be complete without *Mario Kart*? I loved the N64 version the most, because my nephew, niece, sister and I used to play it at the weekends with riotous laughter, especially when zapping someone on the jump in Wario Stadium. And I can't go without saying *New Super Mario Bros*. I also loved it, again, because of the original features, like being able to grow huge and sprint through the level. Out of those four, those being my favourites, if I had to choose one… I'm not sure I can! They all have a huge place in my heart. Why has Mario remained so enduring? Well because he's constantly re-inventing himself, changing with the times, and because Shigeru Miyamoto is simply a genius.



**John Carmack**
Co-Founder id Software
I have followed Mario since the *Donkey Kong* days, and id Software was pretty much launched on the merits of an internal clone of *Super Mario Bros 3*. I was away for a while after *Super Mario 64*, but the last few years with my son have brought me back into the fold – we just collected our 66th star on *Super Mario Galaxy 2* last night, and we have gone back through all the old games. Still fun after all these years. Domo arigato, Miyamoto-san!



**Kevin Toms**
Creator of Football Manager
I remember my first recollection of Mario being on the original Nintendo cartridge machine. Squat, cute character, red hat comes to mind. Probably I would go for *Mario Kart* on the Nintendo 64 as my *Mario* game. His lasting appeal is down to the personality he puts across: an upbeat, likable, jolly man. Most people would get on with someone like that. So he annoys no one!

» [PC-88] Hudson Soft released two peculiar variants of *Mario Bros* for Japanese home computers.







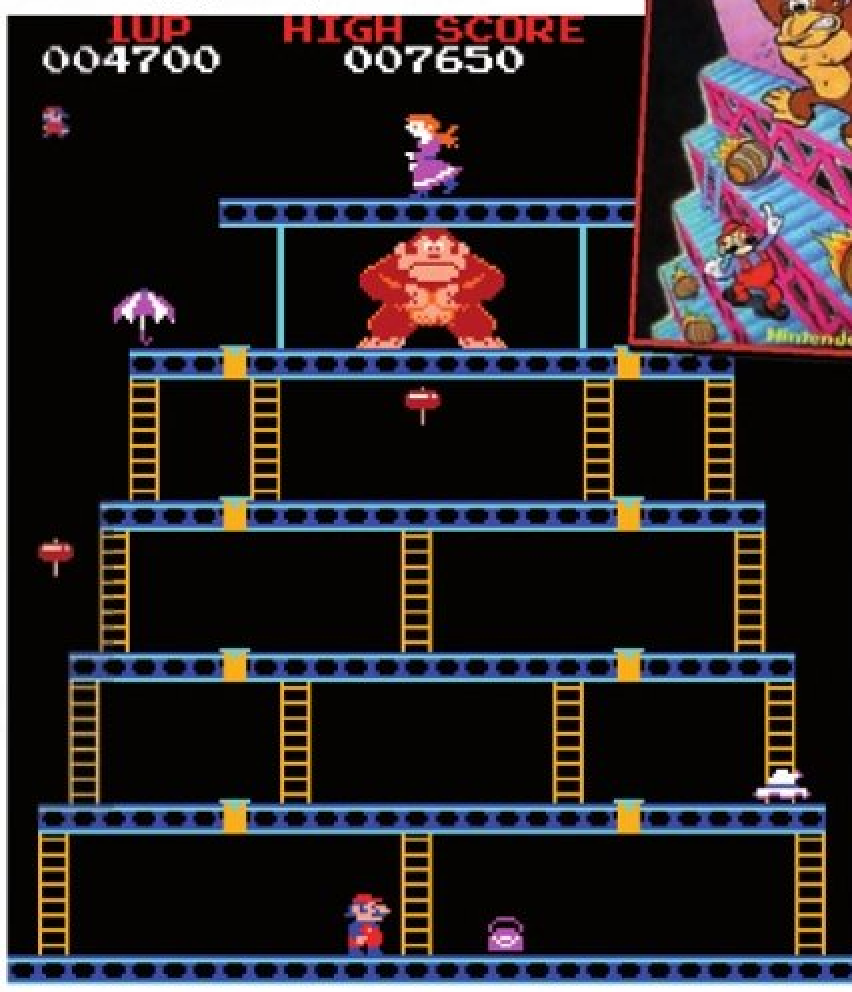


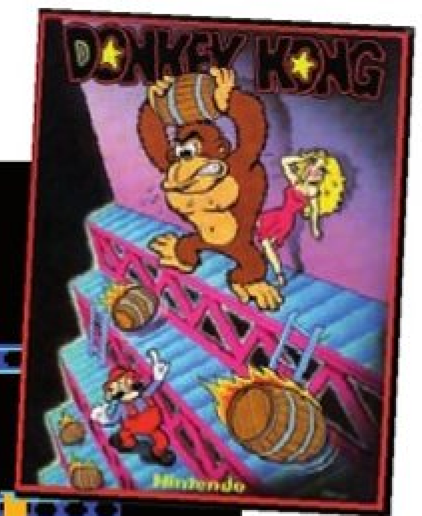
» [NES] The original *SMB* still plays great today . We should know – we played it yesterday.





» [Arcade] Mario made his debut in *Donkey Kong*, where it was DK hogging the limelight for Nintendo.




element of luck and good fortune – although it probably didn't seem that way to Nintendo at the time.

## 'I'll save yer, lady!'

Before *Donkey Kong* was even considered, Shigeru Miyamoto had aims to create a new arcade game starring the characters from the popular King Features Syndicate cartoon, *Popeye*. But when Nintendo failed to obtain the licence, Miyamoto was forced to come up with three central characters of his own. And, after taking pretty obvious inspiration from the 1933 stop-motion monster classic, *King Kong*, he came up with the characters Jumpman, Lady and Donkey Kong to substitute the roles of Popeye, Olive Oyl and Bluto, respectively.

When the time came for *Donkey Kong* to ship to North America, however, it was decided that Jumpman should be renamed during the localisation process. Even then, Nintendo's intention was to turn Mario into a mascot-type character by having him appear in many of Miyamoto's subsequent videogames. With this idea in mind, the first new name that Nintendo would settle on for Jumpman was 'Mr Video'. It was a name clearly derived from Nintendo's first ever gaming mascot, Mr Game & Watch.

However, in what became one of the videogame industry's most bizarre anecdotes, Jumpman's name would change once again. The tale goes that, at the time when Nintendo of America (NOA) was trying to gain a foothold in North America, it was renting a warehouse from an Italian construction tycoon named Mario Segale. Segale was said to have looked remarkably similar to Jumpman, and when NOA's president at the time, Minoru Arakawa, realised the coincidence, Jumpman was nicknamed Mario and the name stuck. What makes the story all the more ironic is the fact that Mario Segale's business was construction, an industry that played a prominent role in the look of *Donkey Kong*'s stages. We can neither confirm nor deny whether Segale once owned a giant gorilla that he would occasionally mistreat, though we're guessing that it was highly unlikely.

With the character renamed, Lady rechristened Pauline, and the localisation process complete, Nintendo pushed *Donkey Kong* out onto the US market, where it became a huge success. And with the millions of dollars it earned, the company was able to fund development of its first true videogame console, the Famicom. But it was Donkey Kong, not Mario, who was gaining the most celebrity for Nintendo. Despite the fact that the big dumb ape was assigned the role of big dumb antagonist in *Donkey Kong*, his domineering presence and cartoon qualities made him a clear standout character in the game. And it is perhaps for this reason why Mario was then made to play villain in the game's 1982 sequel, *Donkey Kong Jr.*

That said, Nintendo, obviously not wanting to turn its character into an out-and-out baddie, did give Mario his very own game in the same year, plonking him back in the saddle of hero and gifting him a green coverall-wearing brother called Luigi into the bargain. The game in question, *Mario Bros*, was a single-screen action platformer that looked and played similar to the earlier Williams arcade game *Joust*. It saw Mario and his brother battle through 'phases' of enemy attacks inside a New York sewer, and was the first game to ever depict the brothers as plumbers – it's believed that this was done simply to explain the game's culvert setting. However, with its premise finding the pair trying to prevent an infestation of insect and reptilian pests escaping into the city, the brothers are clearly acting more like exterminators in the game. Nevertheless, as well as portraying the brothers as plumbers, *Mario Bros* also introduced a few common enemy types too, such as Shellcreepers – a precursor to Koopa Troopas – and the annoying spike-shelled foes, the Spinies. It also established the idea of having the brothers collect coins through bonus rounds, as well as the concept of brick-punching and unconscious-enemy toe-punting, all of which would become staples of the *Mario* series.

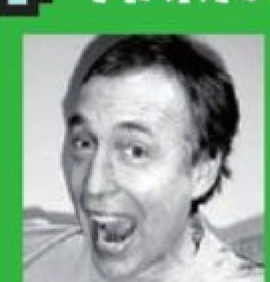
» [NES] Who can forget this trick in World 1-2? Who was it that said cheating doesn't pay? Someone who'd never played *Super Mario Bros*, clearly.




*Mario Bros* received a lukewarm arcade reception, certainly nothing in the same league as *Donkey Kong*, but later proved to be a popular release for the NES in North America. Two variants of the game were also developed by Hudson Soft, under licence from Nintendo. Released exclusively on Japanese home computers, the games featured all-new original stages and gameplay mechanics. The first, *Mario Bros Special*, was an interesting update of the original game that saw players having to fight their way to exit points at the top of each stage, while the second title, *Punch Ball Mario Bros*, was a quirky dodgeball-inspired iteration that saw the brothers punching balls at their subterranean foes and hitting switches. Hudson Soft also later released its own version of *Super Mario Bros*. Titled *Super Mario Bros Special*, this unfairly punishing home computer version featured all-new levels, hair-pulling level design and maddening flick-screen scrolling. In fact, the dodgy scrolling mars the experience so much that it shows just how important a factor scrolling actually played in *Super Mario Bros*' ultimate success.

But we're jumping ahead of ourselves a bit here, as Mario hadn't quite gone 'super' just yet. In fact, while it's debatable that Miyamoto dabbled with the idea of giving Mario enhanced powers in *Mario Bros* by finally giving him the ability to survive a fall – he wasn't capable of bending his knees in *Donkey Kong* – it wasn't really until the release of *Super Mario Bros* in 1985 that the legendary game designer gave his creation real super powers. Before reaching this watershed moment, though, the character could be seen busily living up to his 'Mr Video' duties. The multipurpose butterball could be seen popping up in a bonus stage in the NES game *Pinball* that same year, guest appearing as an unshaven umpire in *Tennis* (1984), and influencing the look of *Golf*'s (1984) moustachioed golfer Ossan, a character

### MARIO MEMORIES



**Eugene Jarvis**
Arcade legend

My first recollection of Mario was in *Donkey Kong*. The character was ridiculous. Why am I a carpenter trying to rescue a princess from King Kong? *Super Mario Bros* is the greatest videogame of all time. It is etched in my brain like a phosphorescent cattle brand. Mario is the video star. He has been flogged and baked into the collective memory of humanity for 30 years. When the last cockroach is dead he will dance on the grave.

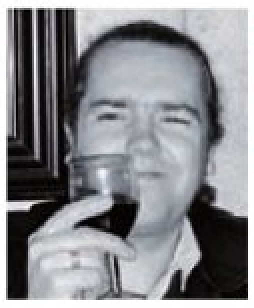


**Jamie Woodhouse**
Creator of Qwak!

I'm fairly sure my first experience of Mario was *Mario Bros* on the NES; I remember it not scrolling, just a static screen, with lots of turtles that go into pipes in the bottom corners of the screen, then coming out of pipes in the top corners. Characters were all simple, yet fun-looking, with a cutesy round feel to them. I think my all-time favourite *Mario* game is probably *Super Mario Land* on the Game Boy: simple, fun gameplay, not too complicated graphically, and of course, it was portable! I think maybe Mario's appeal is down to the personality of the character; I mean, he's not really a violent kind of dude, is he? And he's only there in the first place because he's trying to sort out the big bad boss or rescue his girlfriend – or was that the other game, the one with the big monkey? So I guess, maybe because he's not too violent, and he's there for a good reason, people maybe relate to that. Also, it can't hurt having the Nintendo marketing department on your side!



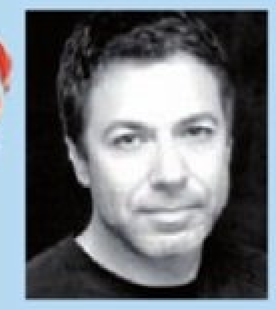
## MARIO MEMORIES



**Jon Hare**
Co-Founder Sensible Software

First time I saw Mario was *Donkey Kong* in the arcades in about 1980. I didn't focus on the character much, to be honest – nothing that special. I thought the monkey was the best thing in the game. My all-time favourite *Mario* game has to be *Mario Golf* on the N64. It just has the most perfectly tuned learning curve ever. I spent a whole year trying to win every trophy and kept missing the final one by just one shot. Next best titles would be *Mario 64* and *Mario Kart*. I think Mario endures because he is a really good everyman character, funny but not too irritating, and he has an army of fellow characters that add a lot to him. Miyamoto is the only game designer that I look up to.

## MARIO MEMORIES



**Scott Miller**
Founder of Apogee Software

I first remember Mario playing *Donkey Kong*, of course! When I first discovered this game in an arcade I knew it had something special about it, interesting characters, unique gameplay, variety, and it was a deeply polished game. From the get-go I knew it was the start of a new era, but no one could have guessed the staying power of this squatty plumber!



» [FDS] If you think this game looks a lot like *SMB2*, that's because 95 per cent of it is.



**Alex Towers**
Designer of classic Bullfrog games

I suppose the first time I saw Mario in action was in *Super Mario Bros*, but that's only because the Mario in *Donkey Kong* was called Jumpman. I found *SMB* a bit meh – despite the knocking-things-over-from-underneath mechanic and a two-player option, the whole thing felt a little repetitive. I loved *Donkey Kong* in the arcades, though, and the ColecoVision version, which was the scene of some epic high-score battles between my brother, my mum and I. I can also remember a version of *Super Mario 3* on an old Nintendo Play Choice 10 machine in a local kebab shop. That was entertaining. Suddenly Mario could do all manner of interesting things and that was quite appealing. My favourite *Mario* game is a toss-up between *Super Mario World* on the Super Famicom and *Super Mario 64* on the N64. Some guys from Imagineer brought a Super Famicom over around the time of the Japanese launch and lent it to us. It had two games: *F-Zero* and *Super Mario World*. We played them both pretty religiously, to the extent that we managed to overheat and blow up the console.

*Super Mario World* was one of the first games I completed in Japanese despite there being a whole ton of stuff that Mario could do. Of course, I couldn't read any of the hints, meaning I missed the one about being able to throw shells up in the air. This meant that to complete the final boss, I had to get the cape on an earlier level and make it through the last castle without getting hit. Once at the boss stage, I had to wait on one side of the screen for him to drop a Koopa before running along, jumping, hitting the thing and grabbing the shell all in one go before using the momentum to fly up to the top of the screen and dropping the shell on him from above. I remember thinking it was a bit tricky at the time but I put it down to just being the



**John Romero**
Co-Founder of id Software

The first time I saw Mario in action, I was at an arcade in Roseville, California, called Supercade. It was a weekend in 1981 and my friend Robert was with me. At this time in 1981, new games were showing up every week. The arcades were the most exciting places in the world. And in this particular arcade, this particular weekend, was a new game called *Donkey Kong*. We went up to the game, dropped in our quarters, and lost ourselves for several hours. When the smoke cleared, we had found a new favourite game and a favourite carpenter named Jumpman, who would be renamed in four years to the familiar name: Mario. We loved Mario's pixelated figure, his cute animations and cuter sound effects. His job was to rescue the princess and put out fire with a mallet. We loved the ridiculousness of it, and it fit in perfectly with the extreme abstractness of games of that time. For me, *Super Mario 3* was the pinnacle. It was just so epic. That game pushed the original NES to the extreme. The cartridge was packed to the limit with data – the game was huge at the time. And it took a while to play through. I was playing it in my Gamer's Edge office next to John Carmack as he coded.

often mistaken for Mario, owing to his stark resemblance to Nintendo's mascot.

## Super Mario… Finally

*Super Mario Bros* was, in many respects, the natural next step for the main series to take. It took the popular 'rescue the girl' premise of *Donkey Kong*, applied it to the theme and two-player mode – albeit not simultaneous this time – introduced in *Mario Bros*, and then stretched the gameplay into a revolutionary side-scrolling platform game. Set in the fantasy fungal world of the Mushroom Kingdom, the 'Super' prefix came from the brothers' peculiar reaction to ingesting magic mushrooms, which took the form of power-ups in the game. Eating a mushroom would cause Mario and Luigi to grow in size, this growth spurt essentially acting like a shield but at the cost of making them easier for enemies to hit. And while in this state the eating of a Fire Flower power-up would make the plumbers truly super-powered, dressing them in lustrous white overalls and giving them the ability to lob fireballs.

Speaking in 1991's *Mario Mania Player's Guide*, Miyamoto revealed how the brothers' iconic growth spurt ability in the game came about: "We developed programming techniques that allowed us to create a larger character than we originally thought possible. At first, we planned to make the game so that the player was always 'big' Mario, but eventually, we came up with the idea for the power-up mushroom to make Mario Super."

*Super Mario Bros* was praised for its innovative gameplay, great visuals, catchy music, super-smooth scrolling, and wealth of secrets to discover – the most notable of which saw Mario actually breaking out of his own videogame in World 1-2; a truly mind-bending concept at the time, made even more impressive by the fact that doing so rewarded the player with the opportunity to warp to later levels in the game.

Selling over 40 million copies, *Super Mario Bros*' popularity can be largely attributed to the success of the Famicom/NES, and thus for also playing a key role in helping to resurrect the console industry in North America following its crash in 1983. In fact, *Super Mario Bros* currently stands as the second bestselling videogame of all time, only topped by *Wii Sports Resort* last year, demonstrating the sheer impact that this single game had on the games industry.

But *Super Mario Bros* wasn't the only *Mario* title released in 1985. The little-known NES game *Wrecking Crew* saw Mario continue in the tradition of his earlier arcade-style games. Rearmed with his trusty carpenter's hammer, and accompanied by Luigi, the game was a fun mix of smash-'em-up and puzzle

game. Capping the brothers' ability to jump, *Wrecking Crew* saw Mario and Luigi race around, smashing bricks and pillars in an advantageous order so as to clear each stage of everything destructible. It even came with a level designer. But while a neat concept, it fell into obscurity in the shadow of *Super Mario Bros*.

## Sequel Sequel Panic

Now if there's one thing that Nintendo was seen to struggle with during the 8-bit era, it was sequels. While *Donkey Kong Jr* was an enjoyable enough successor, it really wasn't a patch on the tight, engaging and insanely addictive gameplay of *Donkey Kong*. And while *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* had its good moments, to this day it's still deemed by many fans to be one of the weakest entries in the series. The *Super Mario Bros* series is no different and follows this peculiar pattern.

**"Mario played a key role in resurrecting the American industry"**

Owing to *Super Mario Bros*' success, Nintendo was understandably keen to capitalise on the game's popularity and so quickly pushed out an expert version exclusively for the Famicom Disk System to satiate demand. Released in 1986 as *Super Mario Bros 2* in Japan, it was a single-player game only, with players given the choice of picking between a 'Mario game' or 'Luigi game', and the brothers were given different attributes: Mario had better traction; Luigi a higher jump. On top of this, the difficulty level was also increased, and the game made more challenging through the inclusion of poisonous mushrooms and more aggressive enemies. But when the game came to ship to North America, NOA stressed its concerns that the game wasn't different enough to be deemed a true sequel, and would be too challenging for Western gamers. Consequently, Nintendo was forced to do some rapid troubleshooting, and this led it to re-skin another platform game by Miyamoto and his team titled *Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic*.

Released for the Famicom Disk System in Japan, *Doki Doki* garnered modest sales, likely owing to its Disk System exclusivity, and so Nintendo had the brainwave of switching the game's four Arabian heroes with Mario, Luigi, Toad and Princess Toadstool (Peach) and repackaging it as *Super Mario Bros 2* in the West. Without the aid of the internet back then, a very large proportion of the planet would be none the wiser of this cheeky game swap. Of course, we later got the chance to test our skills on the Japanese sequel when it was remade as *Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels* for the 1993 *Super Mario All-Stars* compilation pack on the Super Nintendo.

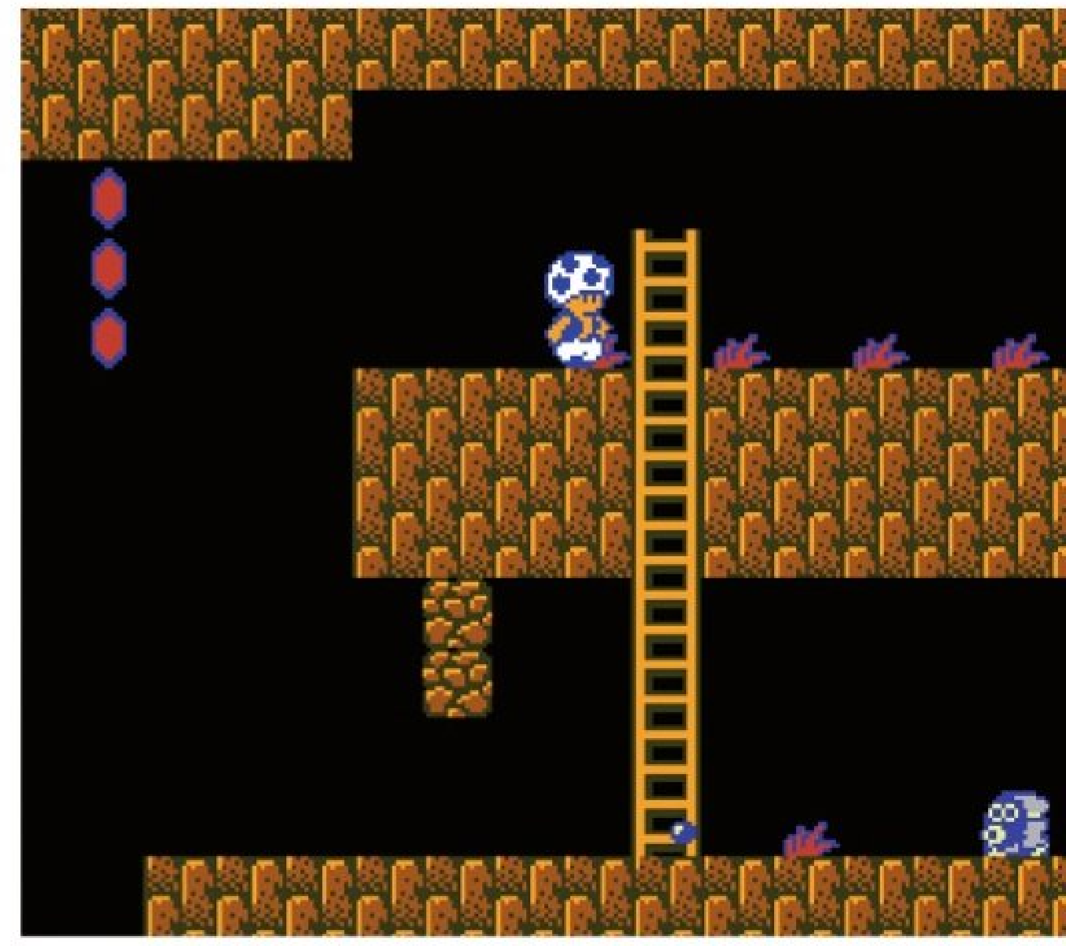
To tie everything together, *Doki*'s story was altered to explain away all the crazy Arabian leftovers – something about Mario entering a dream world called Subcon to defeat an evil frog overlord to free some enslaved fairy kids – and the game switch also explains why many of the enemies in the game never reappeared in subsequent *Mario* games, and Mario and pals' peculiar new attack method, which ditches head-stomping to see them instead pick up objects and enemies and toss them at other enemies.

Released in the US in 1988, the re-skinned *Doki Doki* version of *Super Mario Bros 2* became a hot seller for the NES, becoming the third-bestselling game on the console, trading more copies than *The Legend Of Zelda*. And owing to its success, this version was later released in Japan in 1992 under the name *Super Mario USA*.

## Hollywood comes-a knockin'

Towards the end of the Eighties, *Mario*-mania was starting to take effect, and its momentum was to be fuelled even further with the release of a game that many fans still consider to be the best game in the series. Taking two years to create, *Super Mario Bros 3* introduced more staples to the *Mario* series than any sequel before or since. It introduced elements such as an overworld map, complete with patrolling enemies that whisked the player to battle screens; enjoyable diversions by way of photo-fit mini-games; multiple routes through the game's eight massive worlds; new power-ups in the form of abstract costumes for the brothers; an inventory that allowed you to carry over items obtained in one stage into another, and more secrets than you could shake a Warp Whistle at.

To help create awareness and excitement for the release of the game in the US, *Super Mario*

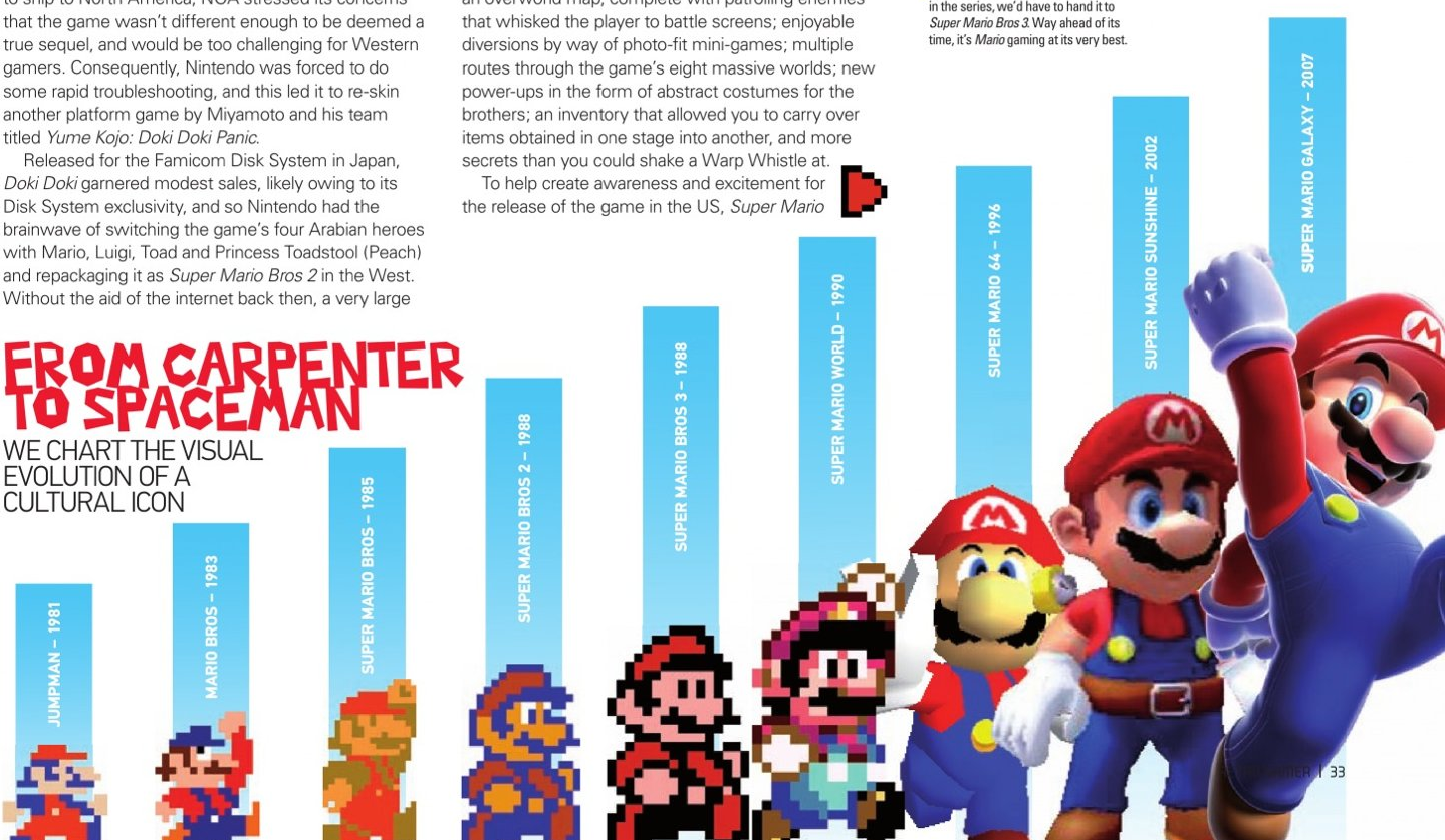




[NES] If we had to pick the best game in the series, we'd have to hand it to *Super Mario Bros 3*. Way ahead of its time, it's *Mario* gaming at its very best.

## FROM CARPENTER TO SPACEMAN

WE CHART THE VISUAL EVOLUTION OF A CULTURAL ICON



# MR. VIDEOGAME




[SNES] The colourful *Super Mario World* stuck close to the *SMB3* template.

## MARIO MEMORIES

**Gary Bracey** Software Manager Ocean Software



I spent quite some time in the early Eighties playing in the arcades, and so my first actual introduction to Mario was *Donkey Kong*. I recall he was the first 'human' character I had seen in games, as all others were cartoon or abstract like *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man*. My next major encounter was when Ocean obtained the rights to convert the first *Mario Bros* platform game, which was an okay game. However, when I discovered *Super Mario Bros* on the NES I was completely blown away and spent many, many weeks playing it to completion… and then playing it again! It's one of the few franchises that has never suffered from compromise. Nintendo recognises this and *Zelda* to be its bar-setting titles, and also its console-shifting games. If they released a sub-par version then not only would the whole perception of the franchise suffer, but it would probably impact sales of the hardware. As for the character itself, he is as synonymous with Nintendo as Mickey Mouse is to Disney, yet a lot more contemporary. Over the years they have managed to develop his personality to keep pace with the advances in console technology, so from the original few pixels there is now a 'fleshed out' character with personality and charisma. From my own perspective, Mario is a reason alone to purchase any new Nintendo console, and I can think of no greater compliment to pay.



**Trip Hawkins** Founder of Electronic Arts

Naturally my first time seeing Mario was *Donkey Kong* in an arcade in Silicon Valley, perhaps 30 years ago. Miyamoto-san is the best game designer in the history of the industry, and Mario's appeal is ubiquitous.

*Bros 3* was memorably first unveiled to Americans in the 1989 feature film *The Wizard*. Released into theatres a few months prior to the game's North American release, the movie's plot culminated in a Nintendo videogame tournament that ended with the finalists competing on a mysterious 'new game', which is revealed to be *Super Mario Bros 3*. Probably at the request of Nintendo, the game is hilariously unveiled in the film as if it were the single most brilliant objet d'art in the history of mankind. Although in hindsight we can let Nintendo off a little, as it actually comes pretty darn close.

But that wasn't all in the way of *Mario* marketing that year, as 1989 also spawned an animated/live action television show: *The Super Mario Bros Super Show!* The programme was an odd format that comprised a short ten-minute cartoon bookended by a peculiar live-action sitcom, in which Luigi was played by actor Danny Wells and Mario by former professional WWF wrestler Captain Lou Albano. Filmed in front of a probably perplexed studio audience, the show saw the pair conversing with drop-in celebrity guests from inside their *Bottom*-style dilapidated New York apartment, and in some episodes dress up in women's clothes to portray female versions of Mario and Luigi named Marianne and Luigeena. And if you think that sounds like a bizarre idea for a *Mario Bros* television show, during the holiday season of 1989 and 1990, Southern Californians witnessed *King Koopa's Kool Kartoons*, a live-action Krusty the Clown-type kids' telly show in which a guy dressed as Bowser presented cartoons to a room full of children, fondly referred to in the show as 'Koopa Troopas'.

1989 also marks the release of the Game Boy and saw Mario lose the pounds for his first proper portable adventure, *Super Mario Land*. A launch title for the Game Boy in Japan and North America, *Super Mario Land* was overseen by the *Donkey Kong* co-designer and *Metroid* and *Kid Icarus* producer, Gunpei Yokoi, and his solo involvement in the game resulted in a unique *Mario* title for the handheld. Putting his own stamp on the series, head-stomping Koopa Troopas now turned them into ticking time bombs, while striking some enemies in the game transformed them into a pile of decomposing bones. And elements of Yokoi's earlier work also found their way subtly into the game, such as a subterranean-style stage reminiscent of *Metroid* (Level 3-4) and the game ending with a side-scrolling shooter stage that saw Mario piloting a plane – a similar closing stage also occurred in *Kid Icarus*. Likely owing to Mario's popularity and the Game Boy's high installed base, *Super Mario Land* became a hugely successful *Mario* title, going on to sell more than 14 million units. It also spawned two sequels: *Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins*, notable for introducing Mario's doppelgänger Wario to the series, and *Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3*, in which the demented-looking villain took centre stage as a controllable character, in another first for the series.

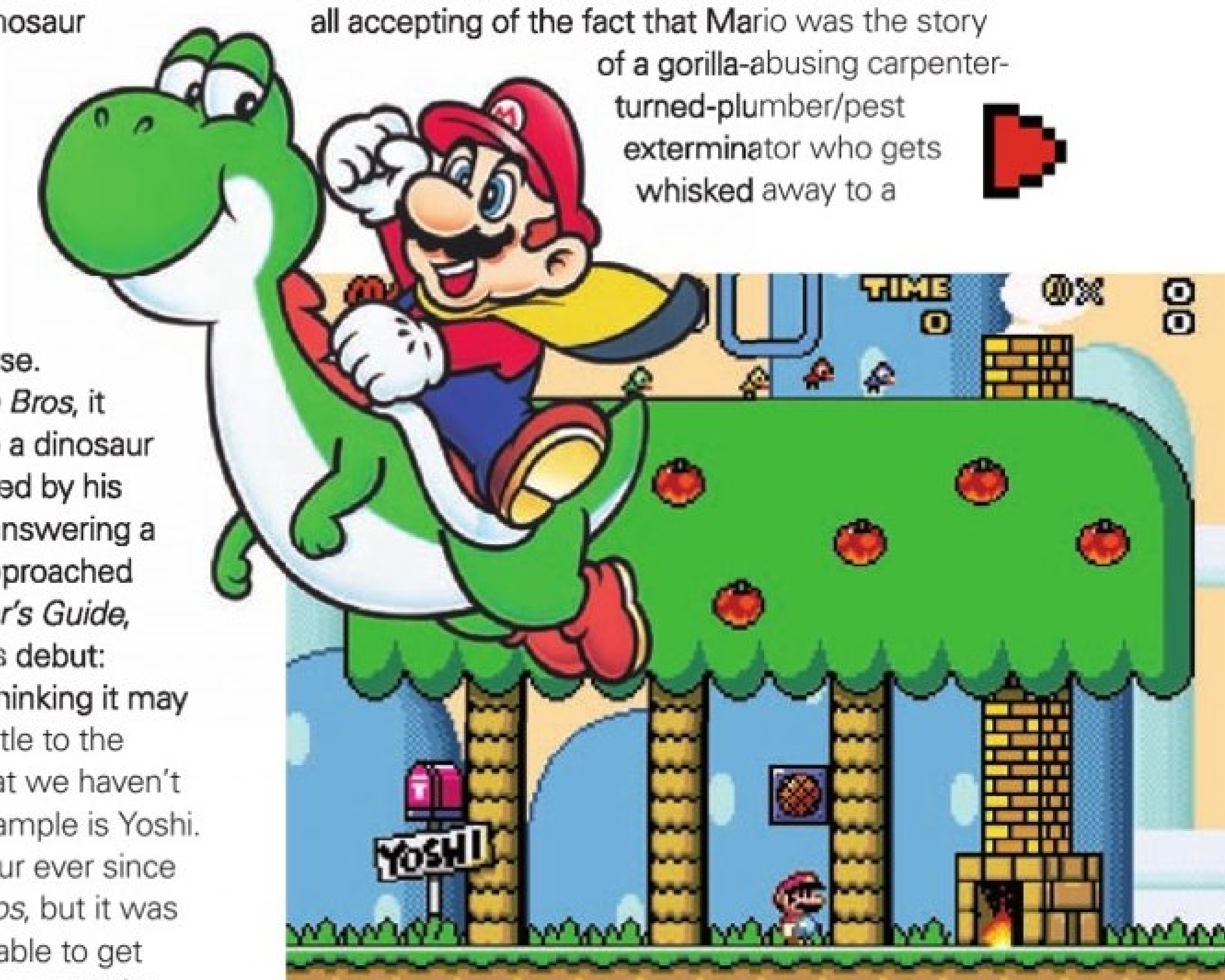
The arrival of the fourth generation of games consoles was an exciting time. Both the arcade and console markets were thriving, the NES had successfully brought gaming back home in North America, and Sega was officially first off the mark to make inroads into this new 16-bit era of gaming with the Mega Drive. With Mario now a global household name, gamers were eagerly anticipating the release of Nintendo's next instalment, especially as it was to be launched alongside its new-fangled 16-bit games console.

Released in 1990, *Super Mario World* stuck close to the *Super Mario Bros 3* template. Miyamoto and his team set about using the extra technical power of the Super Nintendo to create an enhanced, but not necessarily more innovative, version of the NES classic. Gone were the enjoyable mini-games and inventory, and Mario received a new makeover as well as an array of new power-ups, including a yellow cape that afforded him the power of temporary flight, and a lovable green dinosaur companion in the form of Yoshi – a character whose grabbing tongue was possibly inspired by Nintendo's popular Ultra Hand grabbing toy, and whose name could have derived as a portmanteau of Nintendo's then-president, Hiroshi Yamauchi. This is all pure **Retro Gamer** speculation, of course.

Following the release of *Super Mario Bros*, it was Miyamoto's intention to give Mario a dinosaur steed – an idea said to have been inspired by his motocross racing game, *Excitebike*. In answering a question about how he and his team approached *Mario* sequels in the *Mario Mania Player's Guide*, Miyamoto explained the delay in Yoshi's debut: "Once the game is released, we start thinking it may not be such a bad idea to add another title to the series. We usually have lots of ideas that we haven't been able to implement yet. A good example is Yoshi. We wanted to have Mario ride a dinosaur ever since we finished the original *Super Mario Bros*, but it was impossible technically. We were finally able to get Yoshi off the drawing boards with the Super NES."

Nintendo then followed up *Super Mario World* with *Super Mario Kart*. It became the bestselling racing game on the system, and Mario's most successful spin-off game series. Mario was now showing himself as a cultural icon, and the versatile face of Nintendo. In fact, his popularity had swelled so much that it was almost a given that the character would pique the interest of film studios wanting to cash in on his celebrity. And so Mario and Luigi did the inevitable, heading to the big screen for a live-action retelling of their videogame antics for the 1993 movie *Super Mario Bros*, plonking actors Bob Hoskins, John Leguizamo and Dennis Hopper in the roles of Mario, Luigi and Bowser, respectively. However, for all its promise and hype, the movie, which decides to throw out the colourful *Mario Bros* universe to plonk the brothers inside some kind of rubbish version of *Total Recall*, tanked at the box office and was branded an unmitigated big-budget failure, and Mario has never made a return to Tinseltown since.

Mario's next big Super Nintendo release came in the form of *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*. In the game, Mario and Luigi were depicted as babies, with the player now fully assuming the role of a Yoshi and tasked with completing a colourful relay race to get Mario safely to his parents. Of course, given the infant ages of the brothers in the game, *SMW2* is deemed a prequel to the entire Mario series. Its story is thus pure retcon, as the game's ending shows the brothers delivered to their parents, who are seen living inside a house in the Mushroom Kingdom. That said, when you remember that before this point we were all accepting of the fact that Mario was the story of a gorilla-abusing carpenter-turned-plumber/pest exterminator who gets whisked away to a



"SMB3 was unveiled like the most brilliant objet d'art in history. It's actually close"





» [SNES] Yoshi took centre stage in the sequel to *Mario World*, *Yoshi's Island*.

## MARIO MEMORIES





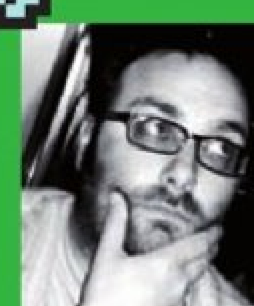
**Philip and Andrew Oliver**
Co-Founders Blitz Software

**PO:** We first saw Mario appear in the *Donkey Kong* arcade game in 1981. A few years later, in 1988, we went to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas and were stunned by the magnitude of the games industry and the size of Nintendo's presence. And at the heart of it all was Mario. At that time, *Super Mario Bros* was at its height on the NES – I think they'd sold in the region of 20 million copies, which was incredible.

**AO:** I remember seeing *Mario Bros* on a Japanese imported NES in about 1986. I remember it looking clean, slick and very playable. And best of all, it was instantly easily accessible. The first time I saw Mario as a character was in the arcade game *Donkey Kong*. Back then he didn't strike me as a brilliant character, but he always starred in brilliant games.

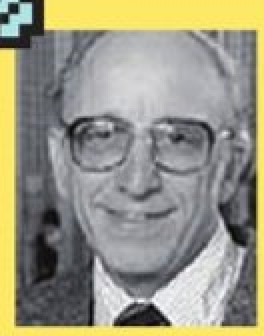
**PO:** All the Mario games are great. I guess we played the original a fair bit, but it was *Super Mario 64* that proved to the world that character games work better in 3D. Andrew will definitely go for *Mario Kart*, as it's his all-time favourite game! It's up there near the top with me too.

**AO:** Mario represents games of brilliant gameplay. He's also had a lot of work done on his 'personality', as the graphical powers of machines have been updated. Each revision has been very skilfully managed and has served to embellish and deepen Mario's qualities – they've been careful never to change his persona fundamentally, so the Mario today is essentially the same guy as the Mario of the Eighties.



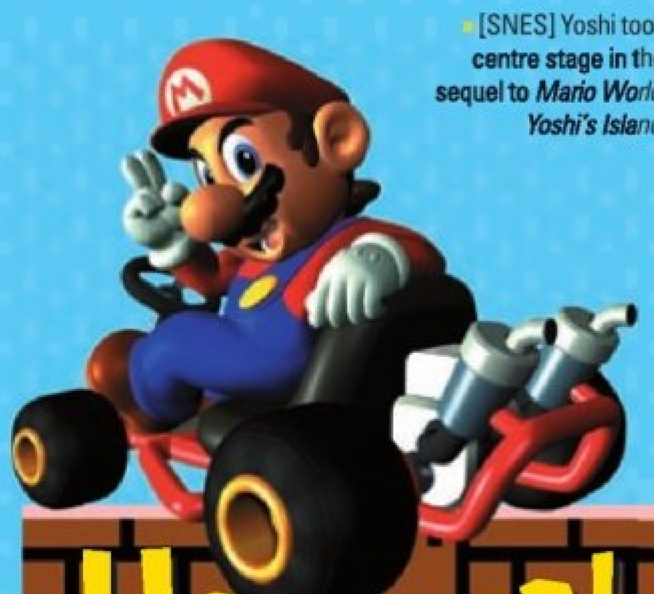
**Steve Lycett**
Sumo Digital

Boringly, I'll have to plump for *Super Mario World* as my favourite *Mario* game. I got a SNES for my 18th birthday, and lost weeks of my life hunting down all the hidden exits, completing Star Road and then rinsing it twice for the second credits sequence. An amazing game that's clearly ageing better than I am! I think his appeal simply boils down to quality. Bar the odd exception, if it's got 'Mario' in the title you know you'll be getting something that's been built with love, care and attention to detail, and will provide you with hours of fun. I'll happily buy a *Mario* title without reading a single review. Nintendo will always deliver the goods!



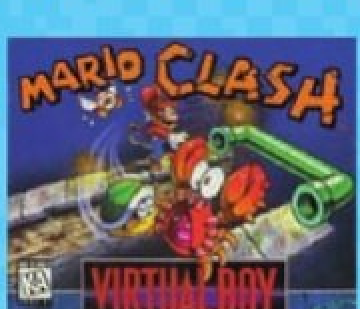
**Ralph Baer** Creator of videogames

To me, Mario is a living presence. I still have the original NES and the *Duck Hunt*/*Mario* cart that goes with it. Over the decades I have demonstrated interacting physically with the *Duck Hunt* game in the manner of today's Wii games. As has been so often the case, I was 20 years too early with those concepts. Meanwhile, who can resist playing the original *Mario* game when that old TV set is turned on in my demo area and I'm not bringing down those ducks by lobbing something physical at them?

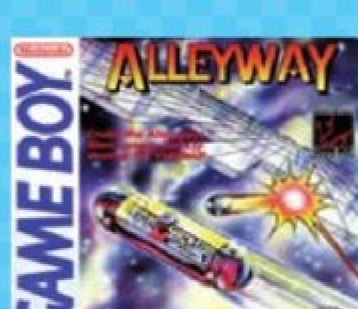


# Honourable Mentions

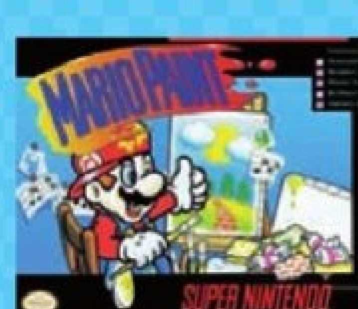
Here are some of the more unusual Mario games, which aren't part of the Super Mario canon



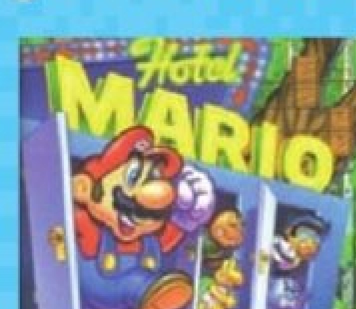
**Mario Clash**
VIRTUAL BOY
■ This red-looking 3D redux of the original *Mario Bros* coin-op was the first of two *Mario* games released for the Virtual Boy, the other being *Mario Tennis*. It's also the first ever 3D *Mario* game, if you discount *Super Mario Kart*.



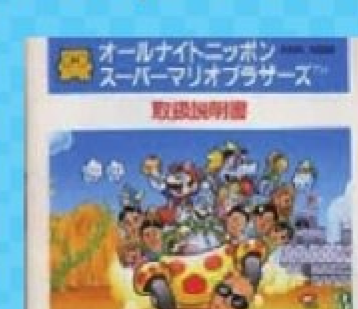
**Alleyway**
GAME BOY
■ Although not really a *Mario* game per se, this decent *Breakout* clone saw Mario piloting the game's bat. You couldn't actually tell this from the in-game graphics, mind, but he's there on the front of the box art, sporting some natty overalls.



**Mario Paint**
SUPER NINTENDO
■ One of the few games to use the Super Nintendo's mouse peripheral, which came as a pack-in with the game, this artistic spin-off allowed budding artists to create drawings, stamps and animations and then set them to sounds using a music generator.



**Hotel Mario**
PHILLIPS CD-I
■ Often cited as being the worst *Mario* game ever. This CD-i puzzle title was a waste product from the messy Super Nintendo CD saga and tasked players with rescuing Princess Toadstool by closing a whole bunch of doors, for reasons never explained.



**All Night Nippon Super Mario Bros**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
■ This game would be considered one of the most bizarre *Mario* clones to find release, were it not released by Nintendo. This *Super Mario Bros*/*Lost Levels* fusion featured DJs from a popular Japanese radio show.



**Mario Education Games**
NES, SNES, PC
■ The plumber also appeared in a series of educational games. These included the geography-themed *Mario Is Missing!*; the typing trainer, *Mario Teaches Typing*; and *Mario's Time Machine*, a thinly veiled history lesson.



**Super Mario Excitebike**
SUPER NINTENDO (SATELLAVIEW)
■ Mario and friends appeared in this little-known *Excitebike* title, which meshed together *Mario Kart* with motocross. Released in four parts, it was only available through the Satellaview service.

# MR. VIDEOGAME

## A Friendly Rivalry… Eventually





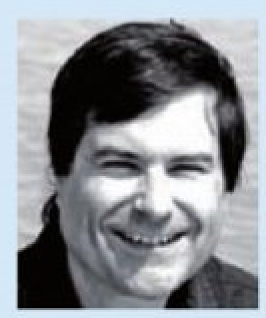
No feature on Mario would be complete without at least mentioning the epic 16-bit videogame war that Mario played a major part in. During the height of the 16-bit generation, school playgrounds around the globe were divided. One side bound together by a love for a dinosaur-riding Italian plumber named Mario; the other in support for a skittish, edgy and nippy blue hedgehog called Sonic. These two company mascots could scarcely be more different, but together their rivalry spearheaded one of the most exciting periods in gaming ever. With each console generation that passed their competition softened, until Sega eventually bailed out of the hardware market altogether in 2001. What happened next, no school kid back in 1993 could ever have predicted: Sega started releasing *Sonic* games on Nintendo consoles, starting with *Sonic Adventure 2 Battle* on Nintendo's GameCube. And then two videogame mascots got to finally settle their differences publicly when they appeared together in the game *Mario & Sonic At The Olympic Games* in 2007, followed by the long-awaited chance to beat the crap out of each other in 2008's *Super Smash Bros Brawl*.

### MARIO MEMORIES



**Martyn Brown** Team 17 Founder

Obviously, like many people, I first saw Mario in *Donkey Kong*, but he really played second fiddle to DK. It's amazing to think that Nintendo took the Mario character and threw him into the *Super Mario* world, as it was an anonymous character before then. I wasn't super sure what to make of the first true *Mario* game in terms of character, other than it being brilliantly playable – I was too busy with the Amiga around that time anyway. I think my favourite *Mario* game has been *Super Mario 64*, the first 3D offering, because it was so incredibly well-considered for its time. I've enjoyed the past games, but they get a bit too hardcore for me. Mario's remained so enduring because he's so charming and a lot of fun. The games are generally so well-balanced to play that it's difficult to get too frustrated and therefore swear at him, although I'm sure it's been done a few times – even by me.



**David Braben** Co-Creator of Elite

I think my first experience of Mario was in a pub, in the original *Donkey Kong*. To be honest I didn't particularly register the character, more the way the game was played, which seemed a little bizarre at the time! *Mario 64* on the Nintendo 64 was the first Mario game I really enjoyed playing, as it was, for me at least, less annoying than the previous outings. Later games are great too, but *Mario 64* sticks in my mind the strongest, as for its time **it was a great trailblazer.** Interestingly, in the days of *Donkey Kong* and *Super Mario Bros* the character image was pretty indistinct and heavily pixelated. Later games featured him as an image, and I think that is when he started to be identified, but *Mario 64* was the first game, I think, that really made a character out of him, for example when he spoke on the title screen of the game. If anything, especially in the USA, I think he has become the icon of Nintendo. Other factors – like the fact that he seems to run like a toddler does – makes him pretty endearing. He is a pretty non-threatening character.



[Wii] Mario's back on top form following two superb Wii titles that are literally out of this world.

mushroom land through a giant pipe and must then rescue their princess from a giant turtle king, we guess such changes can be forgiven.

Released in 1996, Mario's final Super Nintendo outing saw him throw his cap into another new genre, this time the RPG with the Square-developed *Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars*. The game was a mixture of isometric platform RPG and turn-based battles, and the game's visuals utilised the snazzy ACM graphics techniques seen in *Donkey Kong Country*. But coming late in the Super Nintendo's life, and only released in the US and Japan, it was largely missed by many on its release.

## Mario reaches 64

Another new console saw another groundbreaking entry in the *Mario* series come, this time in the form of *Super Mario 64* for the N64. Always innovating, Nintendo once again sought to revolutionise the platform genre, and in doing so proved undoubtedly that the creative, fun, engaging and abundant gameplay of previous *Mario* adventures could adapt to a true 3D polygon world unscathed. The N64's analogue controls also worked overtime to further enhance the experience. With a wealth of new acrobatic moves at Mario's disposal, *Mario 64* turned him from portly jumpy plumber into a gaming Baryshnikov. Finally, through a series of open-ended levels – all connected by a castle-shaped hub – that unfurled with each revisit, it offered players the chance to really immerse themselves in the colourful and enchanting world of the Mushroom Kingdom. It was truly the gaming equivalent of chasing the rabbit down to Wonderland, and with the inclusion of Mips the rabbit in the game, who spouted dialogue very similar to Lewis Carroll's tardy White Rabbit, this notion was clearly not lost on Miyamoto and his EAD team.

Following the release of *Mario 64*, Mario himself then broke into even more game genres with the first entry in the Hudson-developed *Mario Party* series. And the N64 era also saw Mario return to his NES sporting roots in *Mario Golf* and *Mario Tennis*, before appearing in the first *Super Smash Bros* and making his final 'so long' for the console with *Paper Mario*.

Owing to the early release of *Mario 64* on the N64, it comes as a surprise to many that a sequel was never released on the system. Well, in actual fact, for a time a *Mario 64* sequel was in development, albeit for the 64DD. In 1997 Miyamoto revealed to E3 attendees that work had started on the game. However, following the disastrous launch of the add-on in Japan, and its subsequent poor domestic sales, Nintendo promptly stopped support for the hardware and the game was scrapped.

During Nintendo's Space World event in 2000, the company showcased the power of its brand new console, the GameCube, with a *Mario* tech demo dubbed *Super Mario 128*. The short demonstration showed a large 2D Mario splintering into 128 smaller versions that ran across the surface of a globe. It showcased, for the first time, the 'sphere-walking' tech that was to be later utilised for *Super Mario Galaxy*.

The following year, however, and at the same show, *Super Mario Sunshine* was unveiled to the crowds, and while it shared little likeness to *Super Mario 128*, it was formally announced as the official sequel to *Mario 64*. Apart from a story that saw Mario partaking in a spot of community service after the squeaky plumber is forced to clean up the mess left by a muck-spraying imposter, *Sunshine* stuck very close to *Mario 64*'s template.

Set in the sun-drenched Isle Delfino, *Sunshine* kept the popular hub structure of *Mario 64*, and progression still relied on the collection of Stars – now named Shine Sprites. As well as the 3D return of Yoshi, the most novel feature in *Sunshine* came in the form of an odd rucksack armament called FLUDD (Flash Liquidizing Ultra Dousing Device) that Mario could use not only as a cleaning weapon but also as a way to help get around the stages. Clever aiming of the FLUDD's spray nozzles



## MARIO MEMORIES



**Ste Pickford**
Legendary 8-bit coder

Definitely *Donkey Kong* in Stockport Arcade, or maybe on holiday in Blackpool or Southport. Of course I never knew that was Mario at the time. I could never get past the second screen, but must have spent dozens of 10ps trying. The first real introduction to Mario was at Rare. We had a meeting there in about 1988, and they showed us *Super Mario Bros* on a NES. We must have just screwed our faces up because of how ugly it looked. We were heavily into developing Amiga and Atari ST games at the time, and had sort of graduated from blocky four-colour graphics to higher-res 16-colour graphics with large, non-repeating bitmaps. The Stampers told us to ignore the fact that it didn't look that good, and insisted that we play it because it was better than any Amiga game. We laughed, but I think they lent us a NES with a couple of games, and sure enough, *Super Mario Bros* was brilliant. The irony is that the simple, functional graphics of *SMB* have dated much better than the over-worked Amiga graphics of the same period. Without a doubt my favourite Mario game is *Super Mario Bros 3*. We were developing NES games ourselves when it was released, and we were just blown away by how much better this game was than anything we were working on. It was at that point that I first appreciated what a great designer Mr Miyamoto was, and what a great developer Nintendo is. They were streets ahead of everyone else in the world at that time. That game introduced so many new ideas, and had so much imagination – every new level was surprising and delightful. I don't think that level of consistent invention in one game has been matched by any game since, until *Super Mario Galaxy*, but *Super Mario Bros 3* wins for me because of the big impression it made on me when I was younger.

## MARIO MEMORIES



**Greg Omi**
Atari Lynx progammer

I first saw Mario in *Donkey Kong*, but the first time I really recognised Mario was in *Super Mario Bros* for the Nintendo. I was working at Epyx at the time and the testers were playing it. That year I bought NES consoles for all of my nieces and nephews.

*Mario Kart 64* is probably my favourite *Mario* game because it led us to make *Crash Team Racing*, which I consider to be the most fun game I've ever worked on. I loved the slide mechanics and the random power-ups to rubber band the gameplay, helping out the players in the back. Really good level design also. I love Wario Stadium with the unintentional short cut at the beginning of the track where you could jump over the wall twice to get a really low lap time.

Right place right time and branding. Mario came to represent Nintendo as a mascot because of the success of *Super Mario Bros*. This led Nintendo to market based on Mario, which increased his popularity. Popularity is a power function, so once you have brand recognition, you have inertia to give you a leg up on the competition. That's why everyone makes sequels, why movie companies try to make blockbuster movies, and why indies and original material have a hard time breaking through. Just look at social gaming: *FarmVille*, which I now work on, is twice as popular as the next most popular game; there are a bunch of games around second place, followed by the 'long tail' of games after that. There can only be one super popular game at a time, and at some point *FarmVille*'s popularity will fade and another game will rise to fill its spot. *World Of Warcraft* is another example of this.



[N64] A landmark game for Mario, which set an unreachable benchmark for future 3D games to try to meet.

could launch Mario up into the air and even afford him a handy spray-powered speed boost. However, the device quickly became a bone of contention with many fans when they soon discovered that it hindered the responsive control of Mario, and made retrieving stars almost feel like Mario-endorsed GCSE physics exercises.

With *Mario Sunshine* failing to capture or stir up the same level of popularity as previous big-budget *Mario* titles, and it becoming increasing likely that the GameCube would become Nintendo's most unsuccessful console to date, outwardly it seemed that the once-infallible videogame giant was finally losing its grip on the market it formerly dominated, and Mario seemed to echo this sense of dispassion, appearing in a series of decent but uninspired sports sequels – *Mario Power Tennis*, *Mario Superstar Baseball* and *Mario Golf Toadstool Tour* – following a good but equally uninspired *Mario Kart* sequel with *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*. But just as it seemed Nintendo was becoming crestfallen by its fall from greatness, the Wii happened and changed its fortunes in a way that nobody could have predicted.



[GC] *Super Mario Sunshine* marked the first playable 3D appearance of Yoshi, as well as the first and, hopefully, last appearance of FLUDD.

> "This industry would be a far glummer place without Mario"

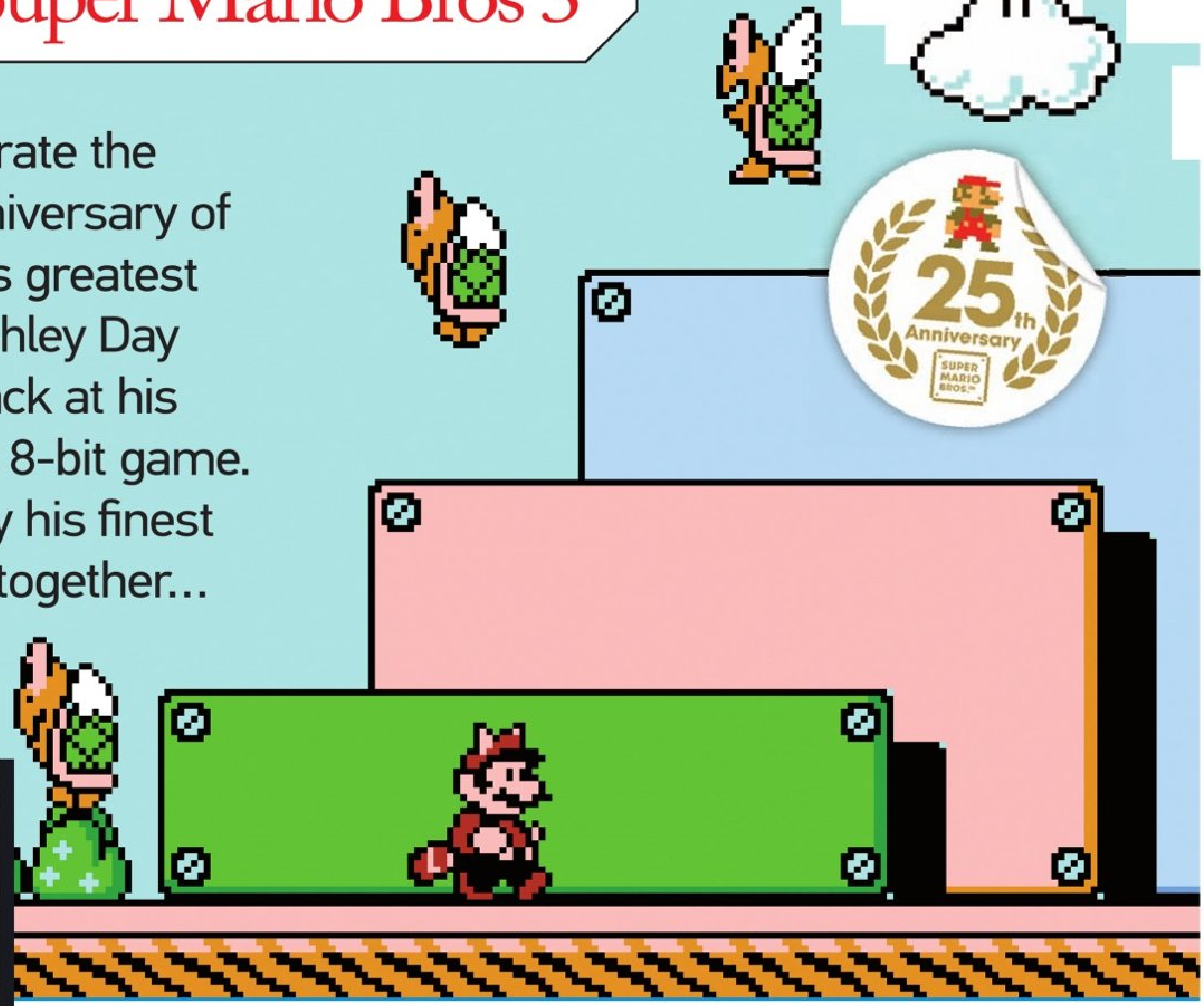
### Space: the finest frontier

Both *Mario Galaxy* and *Mario Galaxy 2* stand as nigh-on flawless examples of expert game design, and rank among the best games in the *Mario* series. By making inspired and sensible use of the Wii's motion-sensor controls, Nintendo was able to recapture the keen sense of fun, exploration and enjoyment that dazzled gamers in *Mario 64*. Making use of the sphere-walking technology first demoed in *Super Mario 128*, Miyamoto and his team shot for the stars by opting to set the games in outer space, with levels taking the form of galaxies, all filled with individual planets and worlds to explore. Like *Mario 64* before it, the controls were also wonderfully implemented. Players could steer Mario in comfortable *Mario 64* fashion, but also aid him using the Wii Remote, which, through an on-screen reticule, could be used to suck up 'Star Bits' and launch Mario between planets. The *Galaxy* games also saw a return of the costume-style power-ups of old, including a bee costume that gave Mario the power of temporary flight, a spring suit to heighten his jump, and the first 3D iteration of the Fire Flower.

Complementing these two interstellar *Mario* adventures was another *Paper Mario* game, one of the best *Mario Kart* sequels to date in *Mario Kart Wii*, and a real return to the character's Famicom roots in the four-player platformer *New Super Mario Bros*, a game that brought simultaneous multiplayer back to the series for the first time since the original *Mario Bros*. And Nintendo's love for the past looks set to continue. To celebrate Mario's 'super' 25th anniversary, Nintendo has recently announced *Super Mario Special Collection* for the Wii in Japan, a special edition version of *Super Mario All-Stars* for the console.

Thanks to the Wii, and Nintendo's canny handling, positioning and marketing of the console, that relatively small GameCube blip in Mario's impressive career has been almost forgotten by most fans. And with *Super Mario Galaxy 2* being hailed as one of the finest games ever produced, it seems Nintendo could do no more to catapult Mario back to the top, where he is currently enchanting a whole new generation of gamers. It's a magnificent achievement. Always entertaining and almost always innovating, love him or not, you cannot deny that this industry would certainly be a far glummer place without him.

# #04 Super Mario Bros 3




To celebrate the 25th anniversary of gaming's greatest hero, Ashley Day looks back at his greatest 8-bit game. Arguably his finest game altogether…

## Instant Expert

**Prior to its** release, *Super Mario Bros 3* was revealed to the public through a canny piece of product placement in Hollywood movie *The Wizard*

**At one stage** in development Nintendo considered a centaur suit for Mario. This was later dropped in favour of the raccoon suit

**Although the Koopalings** are all named after celebrities, their appearances were based upon seven of the programmers working under Shigeru Miyamoto

**At 17 million** copies sold, *Super Mario Bros 3* remains one of the bestselling non-bundle games ever released. The Virtual Console version and the GBA release have sold a further 1 million and 5 million copies respectively

**The idea of** *Mario 3*'s ingenious overworld map was later used again, albeit in simplified form, in *Super Mario World*, and was more accurately copied in both *New Super Mario Bros* games

***Super Mario Bros 3*** is one of only ten games to be preserved in the US Library of Congress's Game Canon initiative. It is the only Japanese game in the list

**The idea of** different 'suits' for Mario to wear, rather than simple power-ups, later resurfaced in *Super Mario Galaxy*'s bee, boo and spring suits

**Whether you were wealthy enough to afford one or not when it was first released, the NES was undeniably a landmark turning point for videogames. After the primacy of the Atari 2600, the clumsy DIY feel of Spectrum and C64 games, and the daunting inaccessibility of the arcades, Nintendo's unassuming grey box came along and changed everything with one simple rule: make games fun. Not every game was great, of course, but every game that Nintendo created was easy to pick up and play, controlled with a confident slickness, presented a challenge without ever being unfair, and positioned the videogame as a wondrous window into another world filled with a sense of discovery and joy. NES games were what videogames should have been all along – it's just that nobody realised until the day they were faced with them.**

The crown jewel of this era is undoubtedly *Super Mario Bros 3*. While the two previous *Mario* games had been exceptional adventures when compared to those games available on other systems of the time, *Super Mario Bros 3* was exceptional when compared to Nintendo's own achievements. It took the template laid out by the original *Super Mario Bros* and expanded it in every possible direction, resulting in a bigger, longer, deeper and even taller videogame. Its seemingly never-ending wealth of interactions epitomised the NES software catalogue and established the *Mario* series as something truly special in the world of videogames.

It might not have seemed like such a revolutionary game at first glance, since the opening few seconds were almost exactly the same as *Super Mario Bros*. The player is put in control of a diminutive Mario, with a paltry two commands – run or jump – at his disposal, the ability to eat a mushroom to grow in size, and the same old enemies – the Goomba and Koopa Troopa – to take on in the same old way. Only a fresh lick of paint indicated that this was a different game at all.

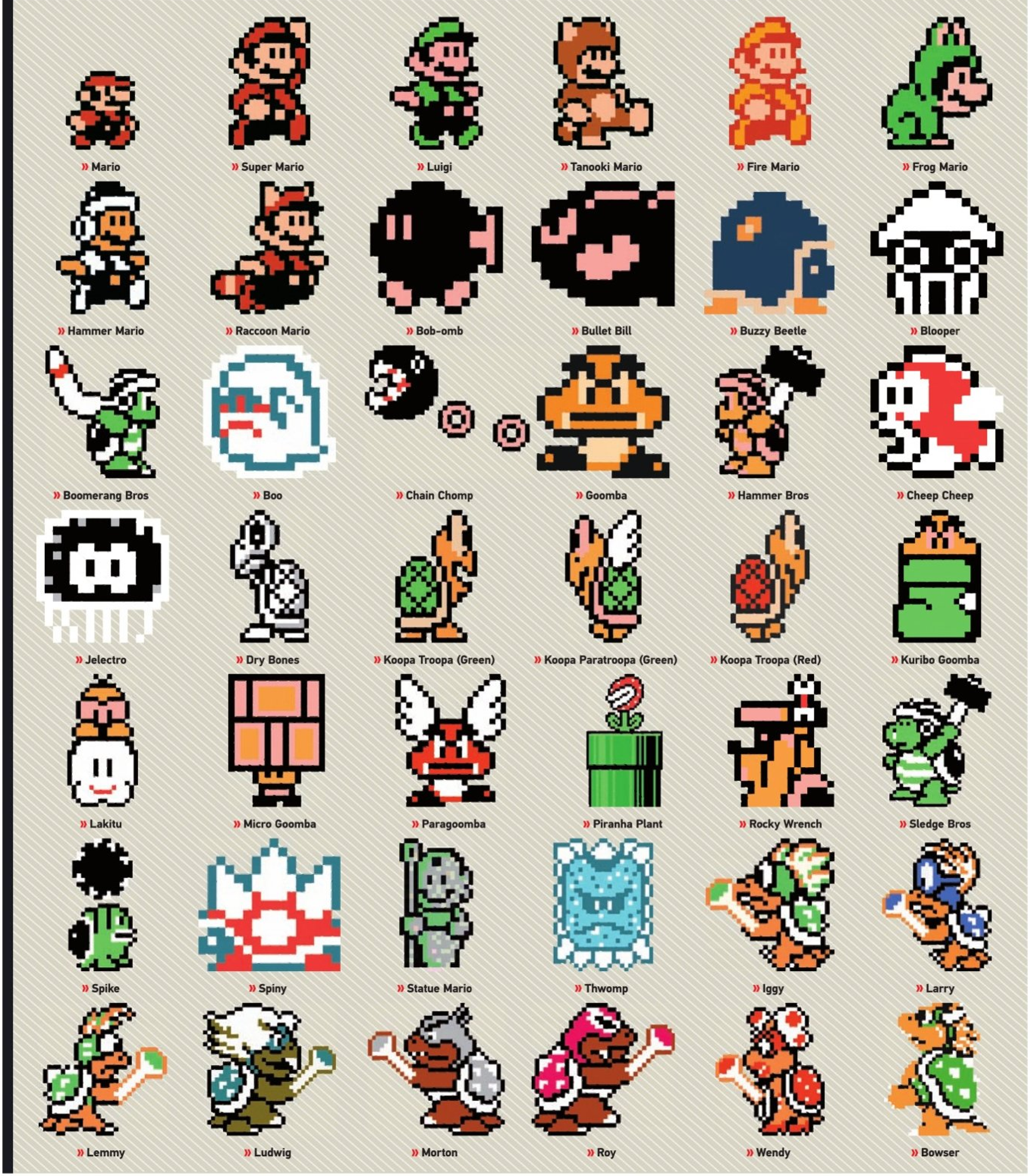
## Play Choice

But even within that first level, there are a couple of hints of the greatness to come. Around halfway through, we come across the first of many new power-ups, a leaf that illogically transforms Mario into a raccoon, complete with ears and stripy tail. Even more illogically, we discover that running at high speed for long enough while dressed in the raccoon suit will cause Mario to lift from the ground and fly through the air, eventually leading to a hidden batch of coins high above the ground. And, with that, the tone is set for a game that has a new surprise around every corner and a secret treat to discover where most games would make do with the rudimentary and the obvious.

Nintendo and, more accurately, Shigeru Miyamoto, had played

## Pixel Perfect

**The many sumptuous sprites of Super Mario Bros 3**



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO… #04 Super Mario Bros 3

## Critical Reception

What the gaming press thought…




"Once you start playing you want to keep going, just to see what surprises are around the next corner! I ended up playing it all night!"

- JULIAN RIGNALL, MEAN MACHINES, 1991

## Twin Galaxies High Scores

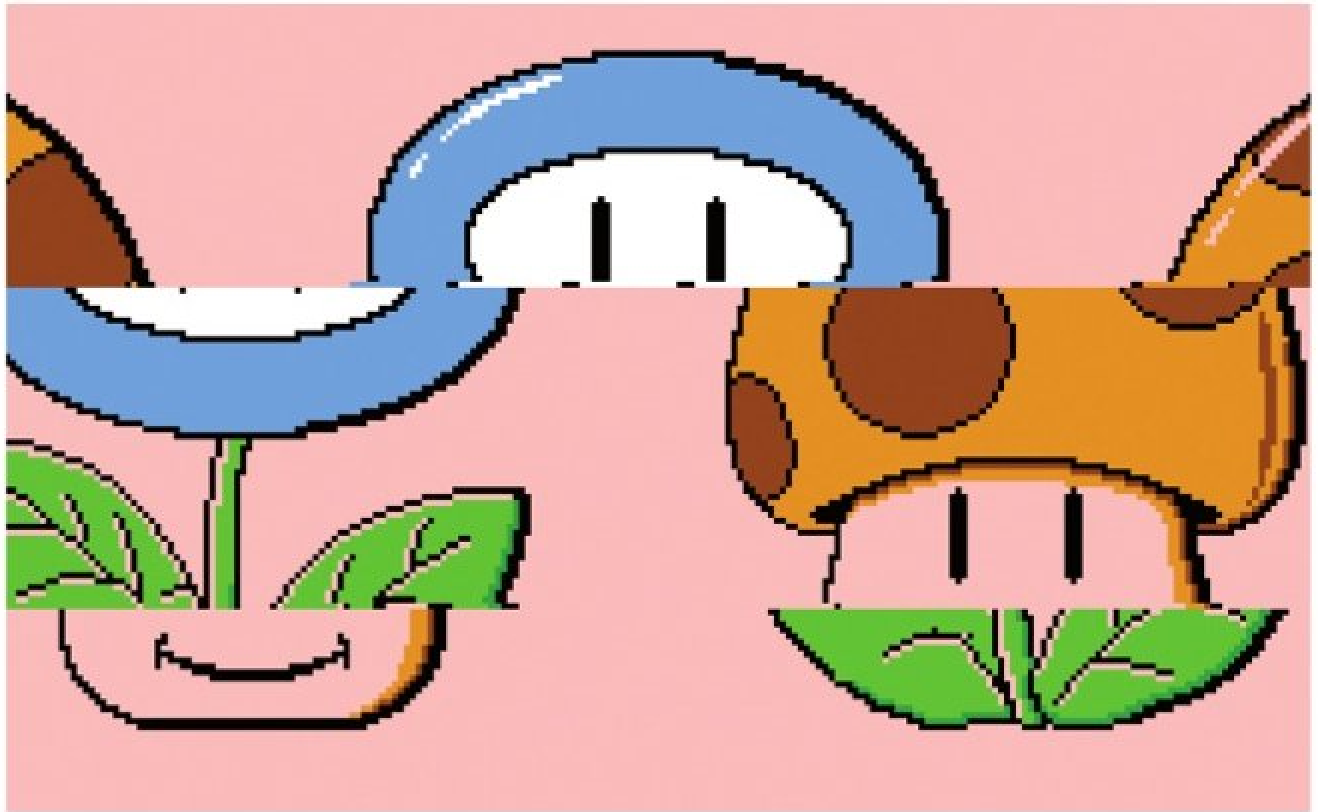
**SPEED RUN**
- **NAME:** RICHARD URETA
- **TIME:** 00:11:15

**FASTEST FULL COMPLETION (NO WARP WHISTLES)**
- **NAME:** KYLE GOEWERT
- **TIME:** 01:27:34

**5 LIFE GAME**
- **NAME:** KYLE GOEWERT
- **TIME:** 2,568,080

around with secrets before, of course. Who could forget the warp pipes of *Super Mario Bros*, accessed by running along the top of the level of World 1-2? Or the many secrets hidden behind the walls and bushes of Hyrule in *The Legend Of Zelda*? Miyamoto was famous for taking a childlike curiosity and sense of discovery and using it as inspiration for a videogame. And in *Super Mario Bros 3*, he turned that curiosity into an art form, every inch of the Mushroom Kingdom littered with secret areas and random events.

Not even the menus were safe from this playful sandbox feel. Rather than simply progress from one stage to another in *Mario 3*, the player was presented with a map screen somewhat akin to a board game, allowing them to move Mario around the board and actually *choose* which levels he would tackle next, take in some mini-game distractions, and figure out how to take a short cut or two. Take the Hammer Bros that wandered around the map screen, for example: bump into one and you'd be transported to a confrontation with two of the deadliest enemies in the *Mario* series. Most players would do everything to avoid them, but if you were brave enough to take them on and win you'd be rewarded with a random power-up that, if you were lucky, would be a hammer that could break certain rocks on the map and open up new routes to the end of the world.



» [NES] This sliding mini-game was one of several that could earn bonuses for the player between levels.

### Time Warp

And, of course, there was the Warp Whistle. Like the warp pipes of the first game, the whistle allowed experienced players to skip ahead to the more challenging later levels. But figuring out how to find those whistles was a much harder proposition. The first, for example, required the player to discover that it was possible to actually enter the background layer of the stage in World 1-3 by crouching on an unassuming white block for several seconds. Once into the background, Mario could run all the way along the stage, safe from enemy attack, and beyond the goal to a secret Toad House where he would be rewarded with a Warp Whistle.



This trick was actually one of the simpler secrets to be uncovered in *Super Mario Bros 3*. One that transformed a wandering Hammer Brother into an airship, for example, could only be activated by finishing a level in a time with an even number at the end while also holding a multiple of 11 coins. Such formulae were cleverly used to give the game a mysterious feeling of randomness, while others, like the Warp Whistle secret, were more about engendering a sense of exploration in the player.

Either way, these secrets and random events made *Super Mario Bros 3* a game way ahead of its time. It was a game that could be played over and over again, each playthrough offering a new surprise over the last. It was a game that offered real choice to the player, years before the branching narrative RPG became popular. And it was a game so packed with new and exciting elements to discover that some of its parts took on a near-mythical status, allowing fellow players to trade their discoveries and speculate about what might also be hidden. 20 years on, it's a game that still keeps surprising us, and we can't think of many other videogames that can make the same claim.



## Power Ups

Mario is famed for his power-ups, and Super Mario Bros 3 had some of the greatest ever seen in the whole series



**» Mushroom**
An old favourite. Transforms Mario into the larger Super Mario. Effectively acts as an extra life.



**» Fire Flower**
Another classic. This one grants Mario the ability to throw fireballs for a limited time.



**» Super Star**
Makes Mario invulnerable for a short period of time.



**» Frog Suit**
Turns Mario into a frog, granting him exceptional hopping and swimming ability.



**» Kuribo**
A very rare boot that we find a Goomba hopping around in. Mario can use it like a vehicle.



**» Leaf**
Turns Mario into a raccoon and grants him the ability of flight.



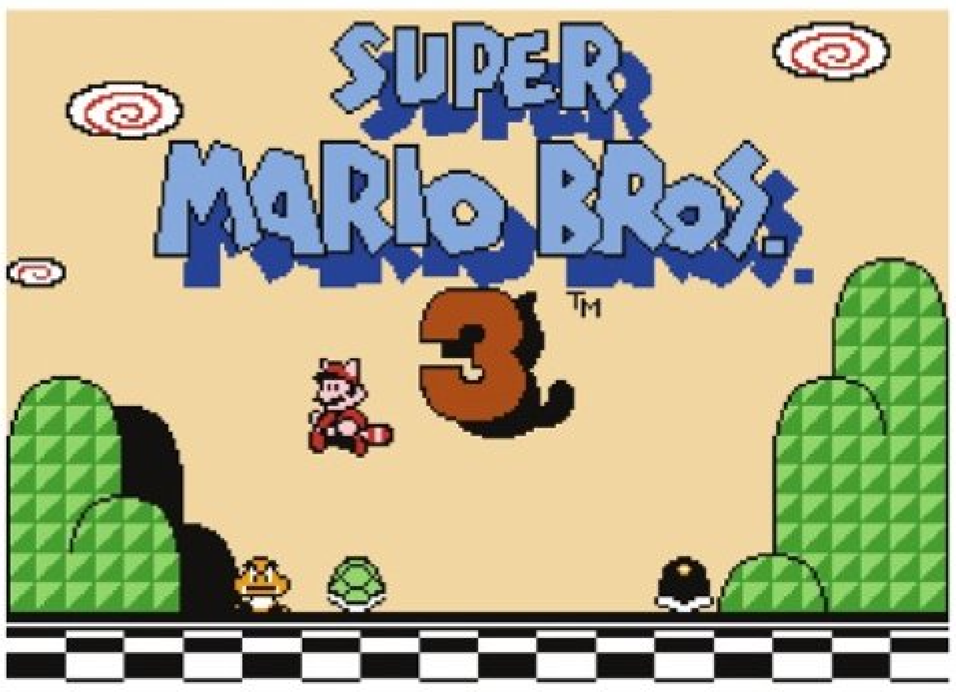
**» Hammer**
Transforms Mario into a Hammer Brother, with the ability to throw hammers.

# Memorable Moments

**We present the best bits of the best NES game Nintendo ever made**

## Curtain Call

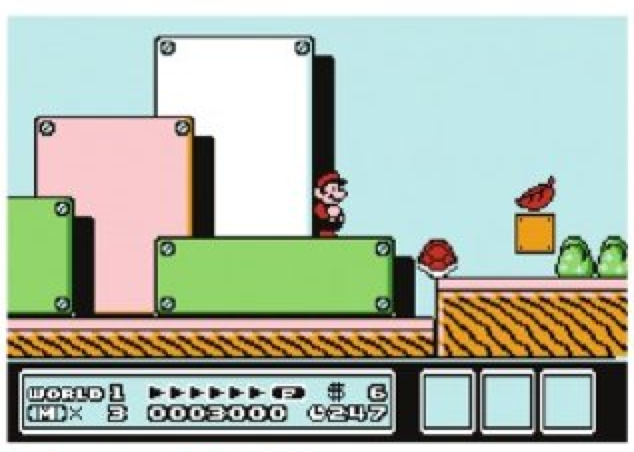
The intro to *Super Mario Bros 3* presents the entire game to the player as though it were a stage production, complete with spotlights and huge curtains. It's a weird premise that's never really explained, but it is one of the most memorable and iconic openings to any NES game.






## Hide And Seek

Crouch on any white block for a few seconds and Mario will fall off it and into the background layer of the stage. Sometimes it's just for fun; other times it can actually lead Mario to a very cool secret.



## Question Blocked

A Question Block sits on the ground in the first stage, befuddling *Super Mario Bros* players who are only used to hitting the blocks from below. The solution: get a Koopa shell and throw it into the block. Genius.



## Non-Linear

Get to a certain point in the World 1 map screen and it suddenly dawns on you that there's now a significant element of choice in *Super Mario Bros 3*. Four different options are available at this first junction alone.



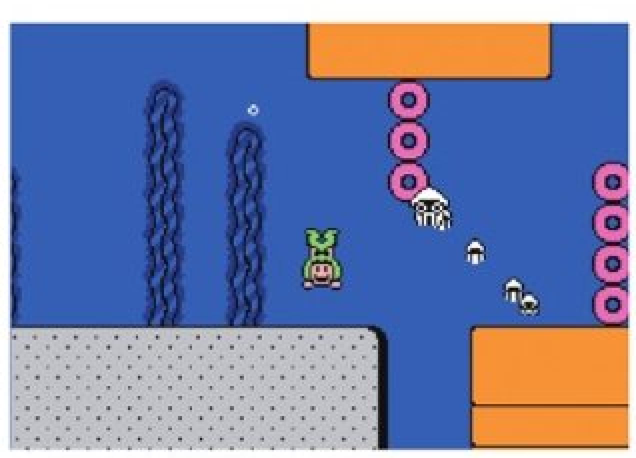
## Bum Rush

Pick up some speed and hold down on a slope like this and Mario will slide all the way down on his backside, taking out any enemies he hits during his descent. It's the sort of satisfying moment that *SMB3* does best.




## 'King Idiot

Cut-scenes in a 2D *Mario* game? Can you believe it? These pre-boss battle scenes were pretty cool, though, always showing the King of the Mushroom Kingdom transformed into something humiliating.



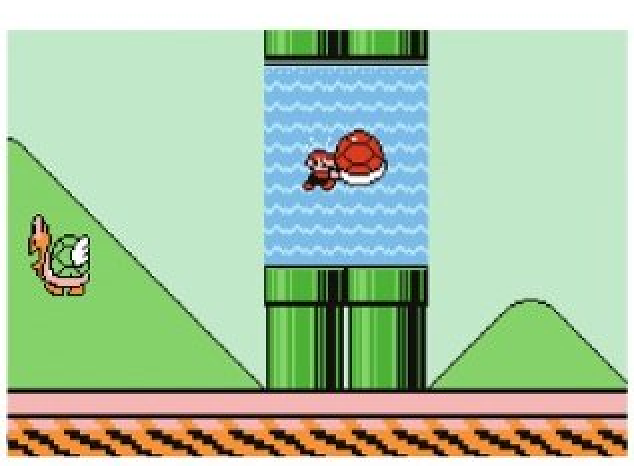
## Hopping Mad

*Super Mario Bros 3*'s Frog Suit is one of the most iconic power-ups of all time and was the stuff of legend back in the NES days. It felt so cool to mess around with, exploring underwater with fewer of the normal limitations.



## An Old Friend

Lakitu makes his return in *Super Mario Bros 3*, but we wouldn't call it a 'long-awaited' one. He's still an annoying little nuisance. His later relegation to cameraman and traffic light holder couldn't come soon enough.



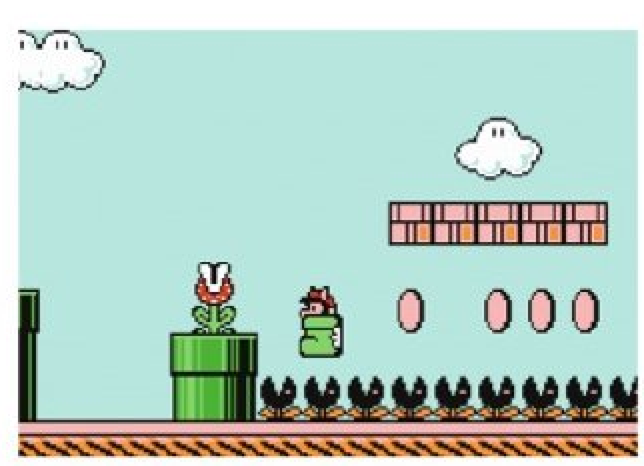
## LittleBigMario

World 4's oversized level designs had a real wow factor in the NES days, even though they were really quite simple. The concept is so well-loved, though, that it was recently revived for *Super Mario Galaxy 2*.



## Statue Mario

The Tanooki Suit is an enhanced form of Raccoon Mario that gives him fur all over in addition to the ears and the tail. Hold down and B while wearing the suit and Mario will turn into a statue, making him invincible.



## Suited And Booted

The Kuribo Shoe is probably the rarest item in *Super Mario Bros 3*, only appearing in a couple of levels. It also has to be one of the weirdest power-ups in a *Mario* game. Do you think there's an old woman and her family in there too?

The ending to Super Mario Bros 3 isn't without its sense of humour, as Princess Peach demonstrates. Cheeky bugger!













# World Tour

**The Mushroom Kingdom** has been represented in many different ways throughout *Mario* history, but *Super Mario Bros 3* was the first time it was presented in so much detail. Here's how it stacked up, from interactive map screens to the levels themselves and their climactic boss battles.



## WORLD 3

The third world is almost entirely made up of water-based levels, always some of the trickiest stages in *Mario* games, especially when there's a giant fish leaping out of the depths in an attempt to swallow him whole. Thankfully, however, our hero has a new trick up his sleeve in the form of the Frog Suit, which grants him enhanced swimming and jumping abilities.



### BOSS: Wendy

Bowser's only daughter awaits Mario at the end of World 3, and she's no princess, let us tell you. Like her brothers, her weapon of choice is a wand, and this one fires what look like life rings. Wendy is named after Wendy O Williams, lead singer of punk outfit The Plasmatics.




## WORLD 1

World 1 eases the player in gently, the opening level featuring zero hazards and only a couple of fairly docile enemies, but the threats quickly escalate. Before the world is through you'll have contended with slippery ice slopes toward oblivion, an assault from the pesky Boomerang Bros, and a madcap dash through an airship as cannonballs shoot at you from all directions. Phew!



### BOSS: Iggy

One of Bowser's seven children known as the Koopalings, Iggy is named after real-life rocker Iggy Pop. But that's not a microphone in his hand: it's a deadly magic wand that he wants to shoot at Mario. Thankfully, he's quite easy to dodge and, a trio of head stomps later, he'll be out of the game.




## WORLD 2

World 2's desert landscapes throw some truly unexpected enemies at you, including a teeny tiny Goomba that hides underneath blocks of sand. One level introduces the now-customary Boo enemy, a ghost that will stop pursuing you as long as you look it in the eye. And in another stage you're even attacked by the sun itself. Weird.



### BOSS: Morton

Not that much more troubling than his brother Iggy, Morton also wields a wand but is able to throw out multiple bouncing projectiles at once. Also named after a real-life musician, he takes his name from American singer and talk show host Morton Downey Jr.




## WORLD 4

The initial stages of this world seem to be a return to the simplicity of World 1's grassy plains, until you see the enemies, who are now several times bigger than ever before. Thankfully, however, lots of other things have grown in size, including the clouds, which are now big enough for Mario to safely jump onto.



### BOSS: Larry

Another boss, another Koopaling, another boring old magic wand. There's not much challenge here, but World 4 itself is tough enough that you'll welcome the downtime. Larry is the only Koopaling not to be named after a musician. Instead, he's named after talk show host Larry King.





## WORLD 6

World 6 is where things really start to get tough. Icy surfaces, spiked floors and multiple enemy types all crowded into the screen make it very easy for Mario to meet his demise if you don't keep precise control over him at all times. Prepare to use a fair few continues in this world.



**BOSS: Lemmy**

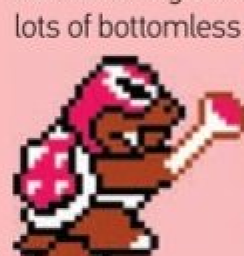
Riding around on a huge rubber ball, Lemmy causes trouble for Mario by launching several other bouncy balls at him. It's utter chaos and pretty difficult to get through in one piece. We'll forgive Lemmy, though, simply because he's named after the legendary lead singer of UK metallers Motörhead.





## WORLD 5

While the first half of the fifth world takes place in familiar grassland territory, the second half sends Mario up into the air to explore the clouds. Being so high up, however, means only one thing: lots and lots of bottomless pits to fall into.



**BOSS: Roy**

One of the most dangerous of the Koopalings, Roy is able to stomp on the ground, sending out shockwaves that stun Mario into submission for a few seconds. Best to stay in the air, then. He's named after Roy Orbison. Of course.





## WORLD 7

The penultimate world takes Mario back to his roots, with entire levels constructed from pipes. A double-edged sword: some pipes lead to beneficial secret areas while others simply house annoying enemies. Tread carefully, Mario.



**BOSS: Ludwig**

Second in command to Bowser himself, Ludwig is so heavy that every footstep is as powerful as Morton's stomps. He's named after Ludwig Van Beethoven, which was a source of amusement in the Mario cartoons as he tried and failed to compose pleasant classical music.



## WORLD 8

Anyone who used Warp Whistles to cheat their way to the final world soon found that their skills were nowhere near up to the challenge, as Bowser's army attacks Mario with a mile-long caravan of gigantic tanks. This level, and the handful that followed, are some of the hardest in Mario's history.

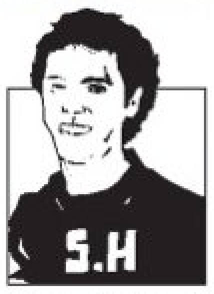


**BOSS: Bowser**

King Koopa himself awaits Mario at the end of World 8, and he's suitably tough to beat. You can't actually hurt him, so dodge his fireballs and try to get him to stomp in the middle of the stage. If he does it enough he'll break the floor and fall into the lava below.

# Super Mario 64

## OUR PRINCESS IS IN A SUPERIOR CASTLE




» NINTENDO 64
» NINTENDO EAD
» 1996

**Unlike most 3D games released in the mid-to-late Nineties, *Super Mario 64*, like its entire 2D sprite-pushing forerunners, hasn't aged a day. The *Mario* games have always had this timeless quality, a layer of gaming moisturiser that protects them from the harsh elements of technological advances, and no game showcases this better than Mario's first 'true' 3D debut.**

Released in 1996 as a launch title for the N64 in Japan, *Super Mario 64* dazzled the entire games industry on its release, and made most other 3D polygonal offerings on the Saturn and PlayStation look practically outmoded by comparison.

Upon seeing the game's memorable title screen, which displayed a fully 3D Mario face that players could pinch and pull around like a restless baby, you were instantly confident that Nintendo had captured the fun and magic of previous *Mario* games, but then you actually played the thing and couldn't quite believe what you were experiencing. How could a single game cram in so much enjoyable gameplay?

In previous 2D *Mario* games players could explore levels (in the first *Super Mario* game you even break out of a level), but owing to the technical limits of Nintendo's previous two machines, exploration meant bashing every floating block and scouring every area or stage to see whether Nintendo had sneakily hidden a piece of green pipe that would transport you to a new bit of level. While this theme was expanded in *Super Mario World*, in *Super Mario 64* Miyamoto and his design team gave players a huge living animated *Mario* world to explore. With completion of a stage resting on the retrieval of stars instead of the jumping on flagpoles, it was a perfect way to take in all of the sights the game had to offer.

Furthermore, the levels in the game opened up to the player more organically, and this freedom to explore, discover and revisit was enhanced further through Mario's expanded move repertoire, which now included a double jump, forward and backwards somersault and a handy wall-kick to effortless get him from A to B.

Perfect design and attuned controls, along with strong emphasis on play and exploration, is what make *Super Mario 64* one of the most playable videogames of all time. Return to it again and remind yourself why nobody does it better than Nintendo.




SUPER MARIO 64
SUPER MARIO 64
SUPER MARIO 64

# BOSS/RUSH

IT TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED FOR GAMERS TO TRULY FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE BIGGEST BADASS IN THE GALAXY…

## DARTH VADER

**Despite his presence as the wheezy antagonist of the original trilogy, Skywalker Snr doesn't feature as prominently in *Star Wars* videogames as you'd think. In the classic Atari arcade games he's mostly off-screen, twiddling knobs on various iterations of the Death Star. He has a brief cameo in *Star Wars,* taking pot shots at you from his fancy TIE Fighter, but for *The Empire Strikes Back*, he's consigned to a wonky portrait on the title screen, and in *Return Of The Jedi* he doesn't even show up, not even for a sing-along after the Empire is brought to its knees by small furry creatures.**

Parker Brothers' *Death Star Battle* marks Vader's home in-game debut – he's seen legging it from the soon-to-be-exploded Death Star by shuttle – but it's hardly a fitting entrance, or indeed exit, for a Dark Lord of the Sith. He makes his first appearance as a proper boss in Namco's Japan-only Famicom *Star Wars* game, which also happens to be one of the most difficult platform games ever made. During each stage you fight what appears to be Vader, or possibly some of his previously unmentioned relatives, who inexplicably transforms into scorpions, sharks or other assorted creatures. You eventually run into the 'real' Vader in a horribly convoluted Death Star level. And then you'll die, until you realise that you can't hurt him without first getting Obi-Wan to tell you to 'use the Force'. Then you'll die, given the game's terribly vague collision detection and the fact that you only have three lives to finish it.

Vader next shows up in *The Empire Strikes Back* on the NES, on Dagobah as an easy mirage and for the finale at Cloud City. Unfortunately, the game is so dull that we'd be surprised if anyone ever reached the end. Also, as far as we can make out, thanks to Nintendo Luke gets to keep the arm. Things are much better in the SNES *Super Star Wars* series – even if the first game doesn't feature Vader in person, you can get blasted out of your X-Wing by him nicely during the trench run, and in *Super Empire Strikes Back* you finally get to have a decent scrap. On the endless gantries over Bespin, he'll pop up to taunt you before helpfully chucking you out of a window. When you reach him for the final time he becomes a raving, saber-spinning loon who delights in using his powers to throw vast chunks of metalwork at your face. If you've acquired the Force skills Deflection, which parries Vader's saber attacks, and Heal, you might just have a fighting chance. Otherwise, prepare to wave your extremities goodbye.

Vader makes another appearance in *Super Return Of The Jedi*, although as a prelude to the big showdown with the Emperor, he's a mere shadow of his *Empire* self. He also pops up in Sega's *Star Wars Trilogy Arcade* in a 3D Lightsaber battle, but he's a bit of a pushover. And that's pretty much it, until he turns up in *Lego Star Wars* and *The Force Unleashed.* Well okay, in *TIE Fighter* he's a kind of boss, but given the threat of remote strangulation or explosion into space, we're not sure of the work benefits. A stray laser in the ventilation system could seriously ruin your day.




### GAME INFO

- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS/JVC
- **DEVELOPER:** SCULPTURED SOFTWARE





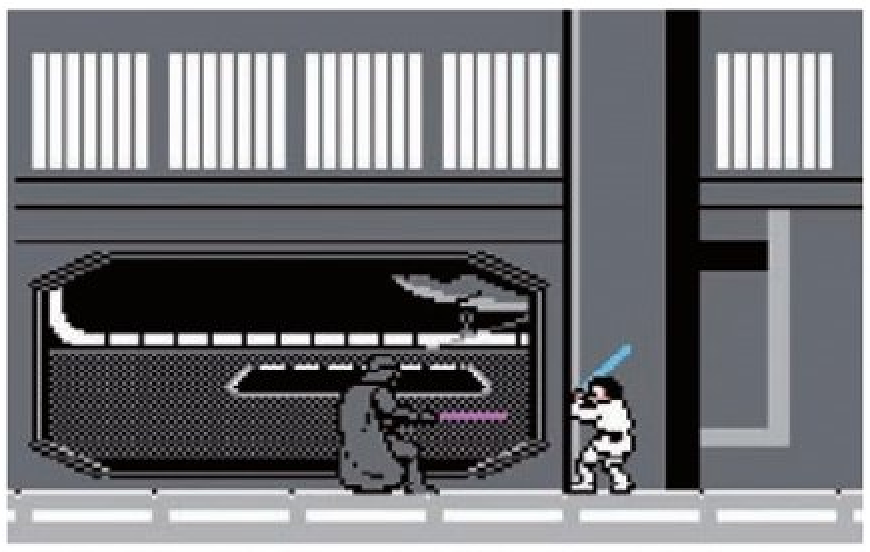



» [SNES] *Super Empire Strikes Back*: Vader flings around various parts of your immediate surroundings for his own casual amusement.

> **"Work on your Force skills, or wave your extremities goodbye"**




» [SNES] *Super Return Of The Jedi*: No flying metallic shrapnel? Your powers are weak, old man.



» [Famicom] Namco's *Star Wars* sees Vader facing a black-haired Luke – if you can find him among the hideous maze that makes up the Death Star.




» [SNES] *Super Star Wars*: This is probably the closest most gamers got to the Sith Lord before *Super Empire Strikes Back*.


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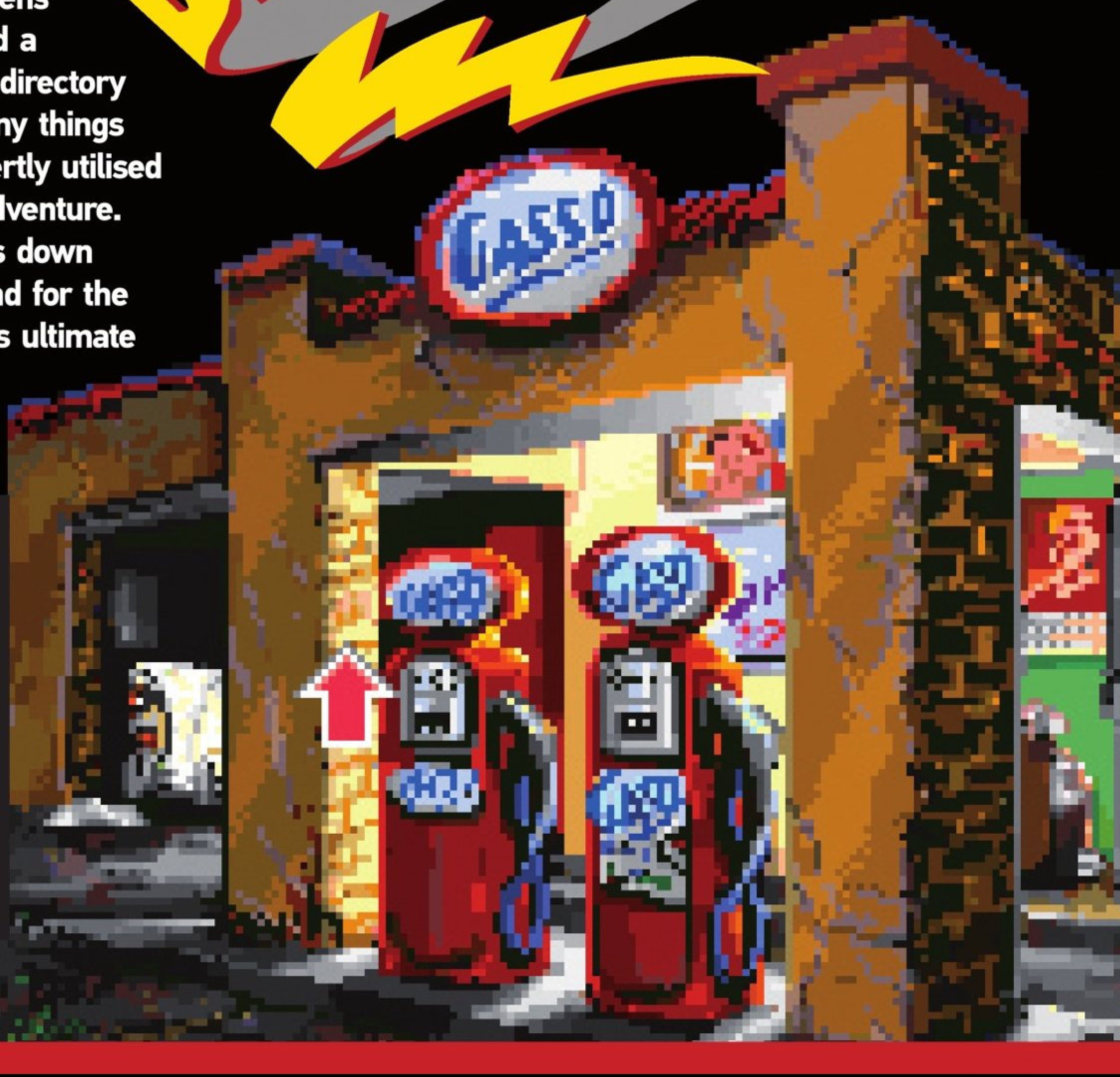
# LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS

**Mad scientists, hissing giant fly-traps, canals on Mars, sex-crazed vixens from outer space and a Cleveland telephone directory – just five of the many things Steve Meretzky expertly utilised for his bawdy text adventure. Craig Grannell tracks down the ex-Infocom legend for the lowdown on gaming's ultimate 'sex farce'**




## IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** INFOCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, APPLE MAC, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, C64, DOS,
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** TEXT ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

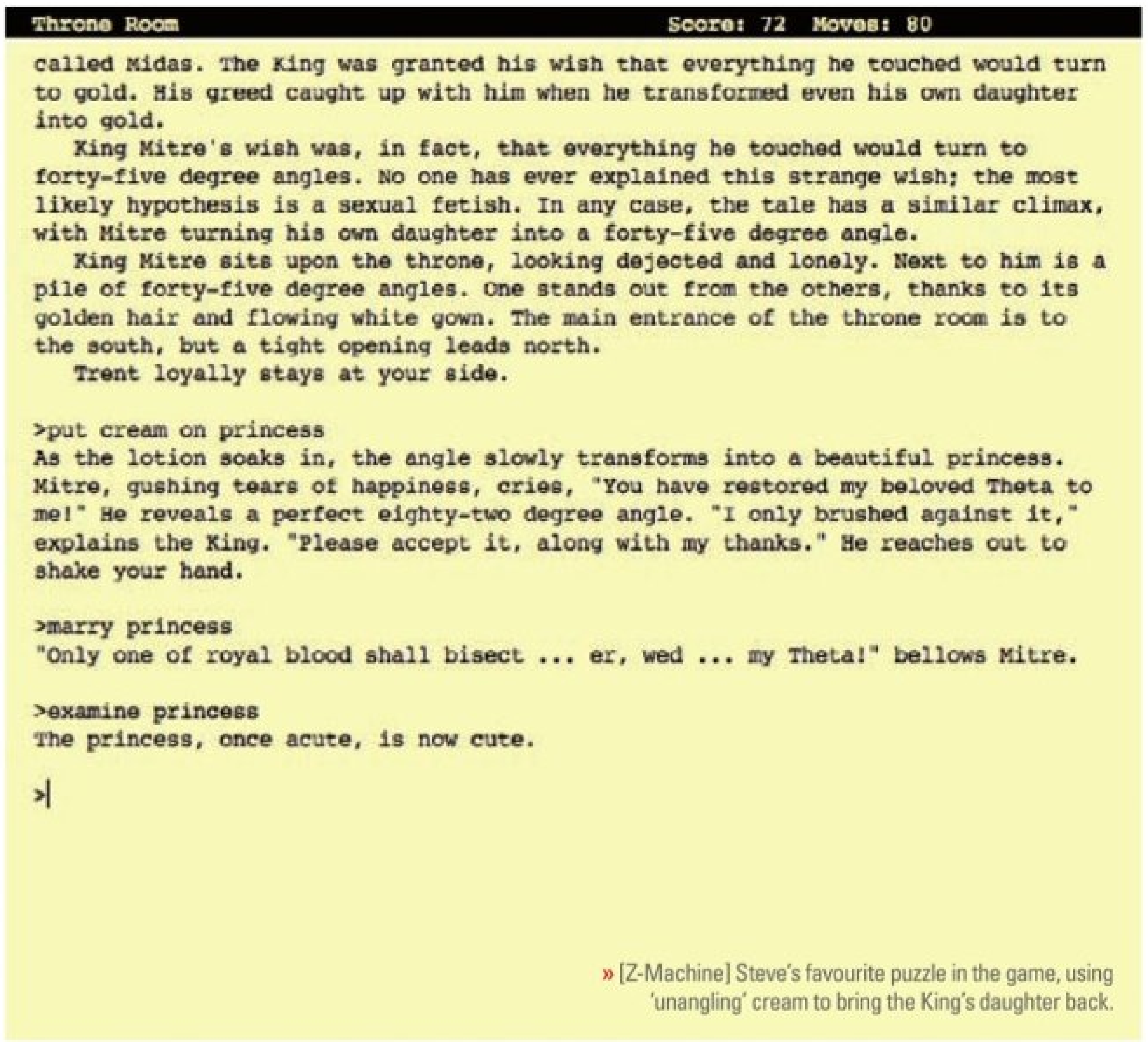


**There can't be that many games where you have sex with a gorilla to progress, but then *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* (*LGOP* hereafter) is no ordinary game. Another of Infocom's attempts to subvert and rapidly evolve the text-adventure genre, Steve Meretzky's creation eschews the cave systems, wizards, magic and Tolkien-esque fare prevalent at the time, instead offering a sci-fi-laden and occasionally explicit 'sex farce'.**

Starting off in a nondescript Ohio bar, you're soon captured by aliens with plans to enslave humanity and turn the entire planet into a 'pleasure dome' for the eponymous villains of the game. Your task: to immerse yourself in what the instruction manual calls a "naughty, bawdy, rowdy, rousing and very, very amusing romp across the solar system," aiming to thwart the Leather Goddesses' dastardly plans and save humanity from the horrors of perpetual pleasure.

As befitting a quirky, atypical game, *LGOP*'s creation was far from conventional. Steve Meretzky told us how the original Infocom workplace had a number of individual offices surrounding a large central room, which acted as a combined conference room and testing lab. One entire wall of the room was a huge floor-to-ceiling chalkboard, which contained a matrix of all the games currently in release. The row labels were the games' names: *Zork I*, *Zork II*, *Deadline*, and so on; the columns were platforms such as the Apple II and Commodore 64; filling in all the intersections were the current version numbers.

Therefore, at a glance, someone could look at the board and see that version 28 of *Starcross* was what someone would get if they bought an NEC PC-8000 copy of the game. "Some time in, I believe, late 1983, Infocom was having its first party of any kind. It was just going to be a small, low-key affair, with a few dozen members of the press,



» [Z-Machine] Steve's favourite puzzle in the game, using 'unangling' cream to bring the King's daughter back.

# "I didn't want it to be controversial-offensive – I wanted it to be controversial-fun"



» The comic included with *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* perfectly fits the tone of the game.



» Some editions of the game provide the comic in 3D, along with a pair of 3D glasses.

local distributors and local software store owners," remembers Steve. "It was going to be held in that central room, and beer and pizza would be served. But because it was the first party of any kind Infocom had done, Joel Berez, Infocom's president, and Marc Blank, VP of product development, were kinda hyper that things would come off perfectly."

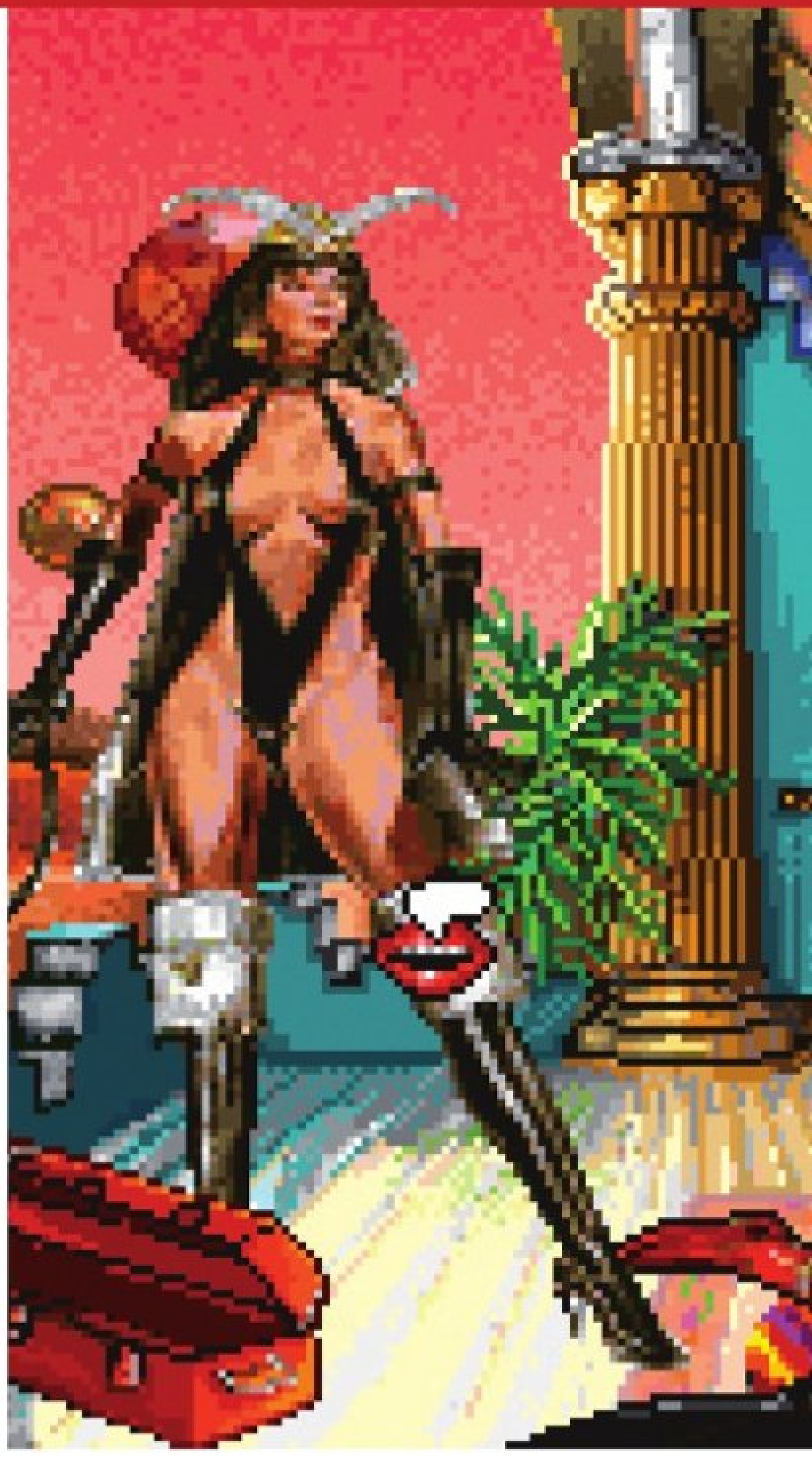

» Steve Meretzky

In that atmosphere, Steve surreptitiously snuck into the room and added a new line to the product matrix, adding a fake game called 'Leather Goddesses of Phobos' below the last real game, and including fake version numbers across the new row. "Joel discovered it just minutes before the first guests were due to arrive, and his move to erase it was about as fast as I've ever seen him move," laughs Steve. "However, the name stuck in the Infocom lexicon, and over the next couple of years, people would always joke about writing *LGOP*."

Having completed work on *A Mind Forever Voyaging*, Steve was wondering what to write next. On thinking to himself that everyone loved the name 'Leather Goddesses of Phobos', he wondered if he should write a game to go with it. On floating the idea around, everyone agreed, much to his surprise. "So that was one of the most interesting aspects of creating the game: it started with the name and everything else flowed from there," says Steve. "On most of the other games I've worked on, the name was one of the last – and often most contentious – things."

The 1930s 'pulp sci-fi' feel grew out of the name, since that's what it implied to Steve, and the same goes for the back story: "Taking over the Earth and turning everyone into sex slaves just seemed like the kind of thing that Leather Goddesses of Phobos would do…" We ask whether there was also an element of wanting to be controversial, especially in the rather conservative gaming environment of the early Eighties. "It was certainly a goal," admits Steve. "Again, the name seemed to ask for it, and I thought a certain amount of controversy would have great PR value." However, Steve maintains that he never wanted the game to veer

# LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS



towards the unpleasant: "I didn't want it to be controversial-offensive – I wanted it to be controversial-fun. In retrospect, there was relatively little controversy, so I could have taken it up another notch!"

When it comes to the game itself, Steve remembers it being "incredibly fun to write," noting that humour has always come to him more easily than serious writing. "It was a project that just went really smoothly," he says. "It was a relatively leisurely year-long schedule, and I didn't have too much trouble fitting everything I wanted into the maximum executable size. There were no big technical issues or intractable bugs."

In a departure from previous Infocom games, Steve decided to let players choose their gender, although again in unconventional fashion. "Enabling players to choose a gender seemed critical in a game with as much sexual humour and sexual gameplay as *LGOP*, but just asking 'are you male or female?' at the beginning was too dull and clinical," he says. "I don't exactly remember coming up with peeing in a restroom to choose your gender, but circumventing the direct question was the problem I was trying to solve."

Your choice of gender also amends your experience within the game, which Steve says added some challenges when programming: "Going in, I was worried that it would add a lot of extra text, and that I'd have trouble meeting the maximum executable size, but the ZIL language that Infocom's text adventures were written in was incredibly facile for allowing this sort of thing." As a hypothetical example that isn't in the game, Steve says that the two lines 'You kneel down and begin sucking' and 'You kneel down and begin licking' are different by a mere two letters. In code, this would therefore look something like the following:

```
<TELL "You kneel down and begin ">
<IF GENDER=MALE
        <TELL "li">>
<ELSE
        <TELL "su">>
<TELL "cking.">
```

When the decision was made to add three 'naughtiness' levels (ramping up the sauce if you went from 'tame' to 'suggestive', and adding more explicit content if you chose 'lewd'), a similar process was used, often with a few words separating each version. Again, Steve offers an example of how this could have been coded:

```
<TELL "The Princess of Mars moans
with pleasure as you enter her">
<IF NAUGHTINESS-LEVEL =
SUGGESTIVE
        <TELL " room">>
<IF NAUGHTINESS-LEVEL = TAME
        <TELL " a greeting in her
sign-in book">>
<TELL ".">
```

"So the lewd version would just end after the word 'her'," he says.

One thing *LGOP* did have in common with other Infocom fare was a penchant for deviously designed puzzles. A section in catacombs is particularly nasty, effectively ending your game with one wrong entry within a string of dozens. However, Steve reckons the game wasn't any harder than the average Infocom title. It does, though,



» [DOS] Despite some smart graphics and a fun storyline, *LGOP2* falls short in terms of depth and difficulty, especially when compared to its predecessor.



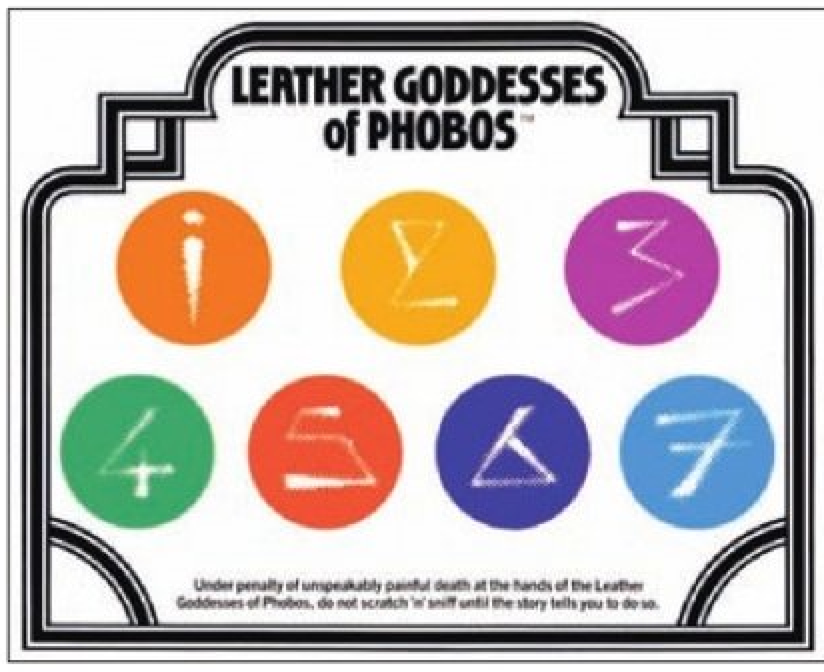
## LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS 2: GAS PUMP GIRLS MEET THE PULSATING INCONVENIENCE FROM PLANET X!

■ SEVERAL YEARS AFTER the release of *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos*, Steve Meretzky was approached by Activision to write a sequel. "They had a graphic adventure engine they'd created in order to port *The Manhole* and *Cosmic Osmo* – the first two games by Cyan, who would go on to create *Myst* – from the Mac to the PC, and they thought an *Leather Goddesses* sequel would be a good use of the engine," remembers Steve. "I agreed, and began working on the design, drawing some elements from an *LGOP2* design that Jeff O'Neill had worked on at Infocom but that had never got beyond the design stage."

The game is set in 1958, with astronomers discovering a tenth planet in the solar system. The Leather Goddesses have subjugated the planet's inhabitants, forcing them to become sex slaves, but heroic tentacled alien Barth manages to escape in a spaceship that subsequently crash-lands in Atom City, Nevada. You play as Barth, who has to put his ship back together, or as one of two human protagonists, who must thwart the Goddesses and their evil plans.

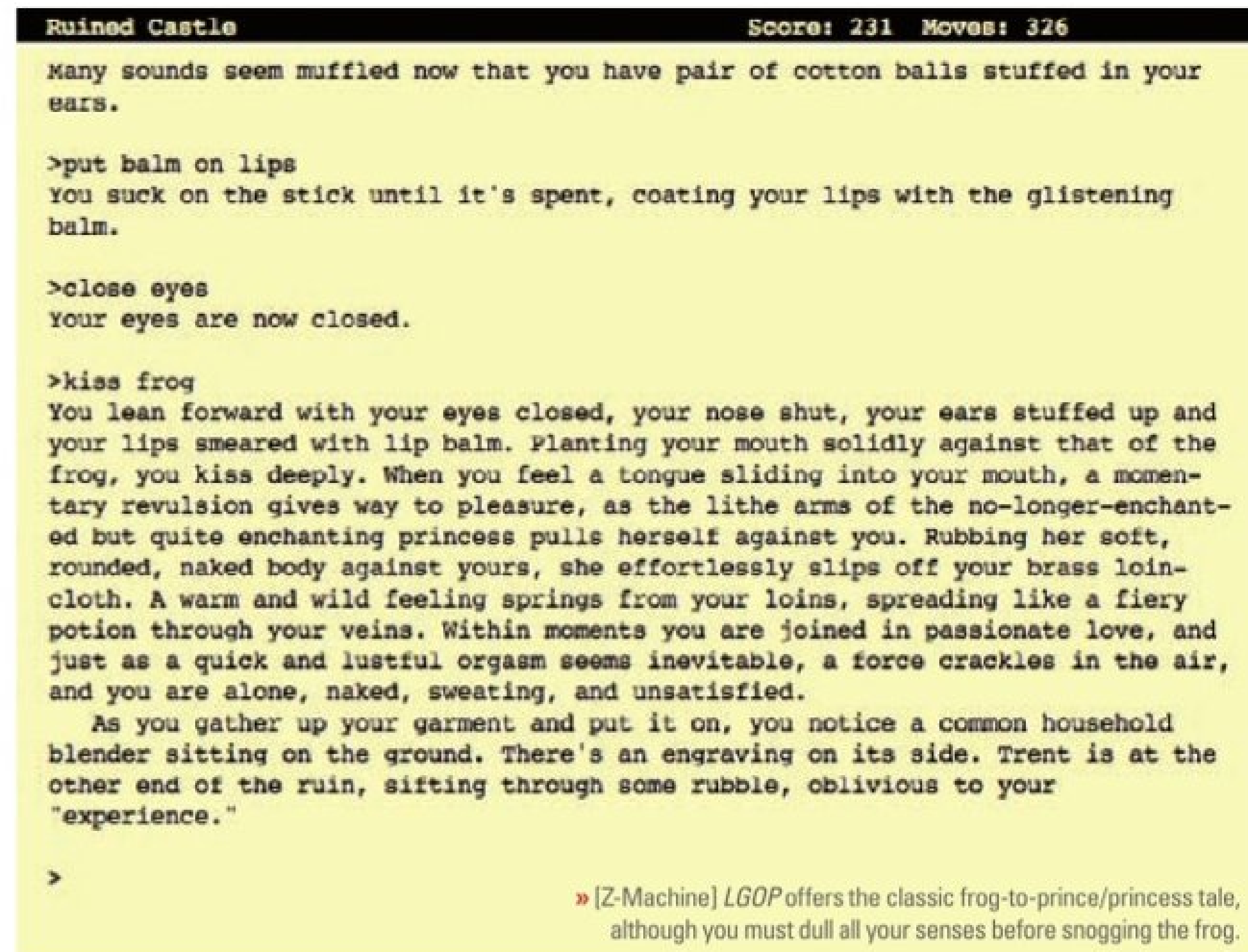
Although branded with a fantastical name that bettered its predecessor, the game itself was a disappointment: short, linear, too easy, overtly censored, and hampered by its point-and-click interface. "The project was pretty rocky – Activision went into bankruptcy, emerged from bankruptcy, and moved from northern to southern California all during the course of *Leather Goddesses 2*'s development," recalls Steve. "I remember getting milestone payment cheques from Activision, but instead of saying 'Activision' in the upper left corner, they'd say things like 'Inventory Liquidation Fund'."

Steve calls the fact the game came out at all "a minor miracle", and maintains that due to Activision's problems, what was released was a skeleton of the game without most of the meat. "You could play through the main storyline and solve the puzzles, but most of the stuff that makes adventure games deep and fun – alternate solutions, fun responses to crazy puzzle solutions, Easter eggs – didn't make it," he explains. "And even if the game had been developed under better circumstances and been more fleshed out, it still wouldn't have stood up to the original, because graphic adventures never enjoy the same flexibility of user expression, variety of experience, and feeling of me-against-the-author, that parser-driven text adventures enjoyed."




» Inspired by a movie running at the time *LGOP* was being developed, Steve Meretzky added a scratch-and-sniff card to the box.





Ruined Castle Score: 231 Moves: 326

Many sounds seem muffled now that you have pair of cotton balls stuffed in your ears.

>put balm on lips
You suck on the stick until it's spent, coating your lips with the glistening balm.

>close eyes
Your eyes are now closed.

>kiss frog
You lean forward with your eyes closed, your nose shut, your ears stuffed up and your lips smeared with lip balm. Planting your mouth solidly against that of the frog, you kiss deeply. When you feel a tongue sliding into your mouth, a momentary revulsion gives way to pleasure, as the lithe arms of the no-longer-enchanted but quite enchanting princess pulls herself against you. Rubbing her soft, rounded, naked body against yours, she effortlessly slips off your brass loincloth. A warm and wild feeling springs from your loins, spreading like a fiery potion through your veins. Within moments you are joined in passionate love, and just as a quick and lustful orgasm seems inevitable, a force crackles in the air, and you are alone, naked, sweating, and unsatisfied.
As you gather up your garment and put it on, you notice a common household blender sitting on the ground. There's an engraving on its side. Trent is at the other end of the ruin, sifting through some rubble, oblivious to your "experience."

>

» [Z-Machine] *LGOP* offers the classic frog-to-prince/princess tale, although you must dull all your senses before snogging the frog.




## “It’s among the two or three of my games that I get the most fan mail about”

contain one of his favourite puzzles. “There’s one with a ‘T-Remover’ and King Mitre,” he says. “King Mitre has the power that everything he touches turns into a 45-degree angle; but – as in the Midas legend – he accidentally touched his daughter, and she also turned into an angle.”

The T-Remover machine enables you to feed items through it to remove the Ts, and the puzzle is solved by putting a bottle of untangling cream into the T-Remover, which turns it into ‘unangling’ cream; the cream can then be used on the King’s daughter. “The interesting thing is that the entire puzzle appeared in my mind, fully formed, as I was waking. I’ve never had another creative experience quite like it,” says Steve, adding that this puzzle also led to a rabbit being included in the game purely “so that you could put it into the T-Remover and turn it into a rabbi”.

Naturally, *LGOP* got the Infocom ‘feelies’ treatment, with bundled extras that added value to the package and gaming experience but also provided essential clues regarding how to complete the game. “The package, with its scratch-and-sniff card and the 3D comic, was the most fun I worked on,” claims Steve, revealing that the card was inspired by John Waters’ movie *Polyester*, which had recently been released. “Audience members got a scratch-and-sniff card and were prompted on-screen to scratch a particular spot at the appropriate time. I thought a goofy idea like that would tie in well with the tone of the game.”

Picking odours for the game was an interesting and enjoyable diversion for Steve, who was provided with a list of hundreds of scents from manufacturer 3M. The list was narrowed to 25 that seemed most fun and relevant, and then volunteers came into Steve’s office to test the scents. “I’d blindfold them, because the name of the scent was printed on the card and because being blindfolded would let the subject eliminate visual distraction and focus on the smell,” says Steve. “I then had them scratch each of the samples to see if they could tell what it was.” The final scents in the game – including ‘banana’, ‘mothball’ and ‘garlic’ – were selected for being recognisable, with the exception of ‘leather’, which had to be in there, but didn’t score highly.

The 3D comic was, according to Steve, fellow Infocom employee Brian Moriarty’s suggestion. “I’d already decided on a comic to tell the back story of the Leather Goddesses, and Brian suggested it be in 3D, which was again just so right for the tone of the game,” he recalls. “Again, this was incredibly fun to work on. I wrote the script – dialogue and descriptions of each scene – and a comic book artist took that and created a 2D black and white set of drawings and dialogue balloons.” Steve remembers an expert on 3D printing then took the flat layouts and meticulously cut them apart into various foreground and background levels, pasting each level onto clear acetate. Each level was then printed in red and blue, with a greater offset in the red and blue for the closer levels. “It was a fascinating process to participate in and observe, and the final comic book was perfect for the game,” he says.

On release, *LGOP* reviewed well, and gamers responded positively to its mix of tough, bonkers puzzles, pulp sci-fi and bawdy humour. However, Steve recalls it was ‘merely’ a reasonable seller for Infocom, shifting about 70,000 units during its first year on sale. “That was good, but not great. Based on the provocative title, on how much internal players were loving the game, and on how overboard we’d gone with this package, most of us were hoping for 100,000 or more,” he says. “This doesn’t seem like much nowadays, but back then 100,000 copies sold was enough to qualify for a ‘Platinum’ sales plaque from the Software Publishers Association – the game equivalent of a platinum record in the music industry – and two Infocom games had previously broken this barrier: *Zork 1* and *Hitchhiker’s Guide*.”

In other areas, though, *LGOP* was clearly a success, not only in rapidly becoming one of Infocom’s most infamous titles, but also in being daring enough to challenge the staid nature of a 1980s software industry that was increasingly fine with blood, guts and gore, but that shied away from anything of a remotely erotic nature. And Steve affirms that he’s very happy with how the game turned out: “Although it never generated the controversy I was hoping for – ‘banned in Alabama’ or the subject of Congressional hearings – players really loved it, and it’s among the two or three of my games that I get the most fan mail about.”




### DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**ZORK I (PICTURED)**
**SYSTEM:** APPLE II, C64, DOS AND OTHERS
**YEAR:** 1980

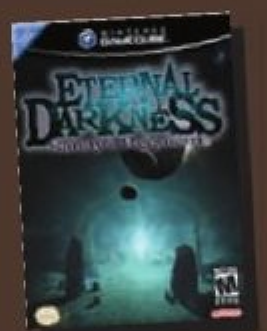
**PLANETFALL**
**SYSTEM:** APPLE II, C64, DOS AND OTHERS
**YEAR:** 1983

**THE HITCHHIKER’S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**
**SYSTEM:** APPLE II, C64, DOS AND OTHERS
**YEAR:** 1984

# Future Classic




*Modern games you'll still b … years to come*



## INFO

- » **Featured System:** GameCube
- » **Year Released:** 2002
- » **Publisher:** Nintendo
- » **Developer:** Silicon Knights
- » **Key People:** Denis Dyack (Designer, writer) Ken McCulloch (Writer) Steve Henifin (Music)
- » **Buy it for:** £6+

## GO DEEPER

- » **Actress Jennifer Hale features in *Metroid Prime 3*, *Killer7* and *Knights Of The Old Republic*.**
- » **A promised spin-off TV show and film never materialised, but several short films were made.**



# 02. ETERNAL DARKNESS: SANITY'S REQUIEM

***Planned for Nintendo's N64, and eventually released for the GameCube – find out why Silicon Knights' survival horror title was worth the wait***

### THE BACKGROUND

It's a brave developer that attempts to step into the survival horror genre, particularly when genre veterans Capcom have already announced several new reiterations of its popular *Resident Evil* series for the very same machine.

Denis Dyack and the rest of the team at Silicon Knights weren't scared of the competition in the slightest. The developer had been planning its creepy gothic love letter as far back as the N64 and was determined that it would break Capcom's stranglehold on the genre; something it briefly succeeded in doing, at least until the release of *Resident Evil 4*.

First showcased at 1999's E3 and scheduled for a Halloween release the following year, Silicon Knights' *Eternal Darkness* immediately set tongues wagging thanks to its impressive-looking fully 3D engine – which was a world away from the pre-rendered backdrops of the N64's *Resident Evil 2* – clever gameplay mechanics and rich narrative. Halloween quickly came and went, and when *Eternal Darkness* failed to appear the rumour mill ground into action, with a frenzied internet speculating that *Eternal Darkness* would move across to Nintendo's incoming Dolphin (as it was then known).

Those rumours were finally confirmed when Nintendo announced *Eternal Darkness* as one of the GameCube's big hitters, and it was eventually released in 2002, some three years after its original announcement. While not a spectacular seller for Nintendo – it notched up just shy of 300,000 units in the US in the three-year period after its release – it nevertheless garnered plenty of critical acclaim and remains a truly astonishing piece of work.

### THE GAME

What impresses about *Eternal Darkness* is its sheer ambition. Silicon Knights had a story to tell and it used every trick in the book to ensure that its clever

## Things of note



### Beta frights

*Eternal Darkness* was a long time in development, spanning two consoles. If you are interested in seeing what the N64 version looked like, there are videos on YouTube. Just type in '*Eternal Darkness* Beta'.




### Villain evolution

Few games allow you to play as your nemesis, but *Eternal Darkness* is one of them. Pious Augustus discovers a relic that transforms him into the antagonist that will haunt the player throughout the rest of the game.




### Award winner

Silicon Knights walked away with 'Outstanding Achievement in Character or Story Development' at the Interactive Achievement Awards. Other winners have included *ICO*, *Star Wars:KOTOR* and *BioShock*.



### Grim and gruesome

Death is often and grisly in *Eternal Darkness*. As a result, it became the very first Nintendo-published game to receive a Mature rating in the states. It received a 15 certificate in the United Kingdom.



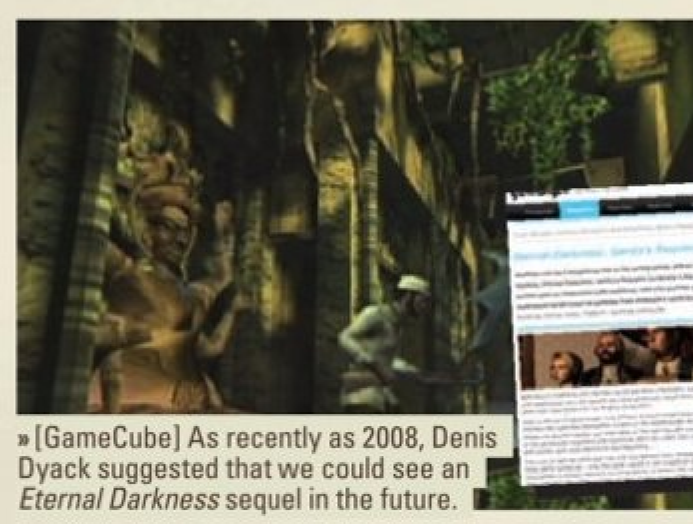
### Team players

It's rare to see such a large cast of playable characters, and rarer still to see so many believable ones. *Eternal Darkness* managed where so many others had failed. It remains one of the game's most satisfying aspects.



» [GameCube] With 12 characters and a story that moves between 26 BC and 2000 AD, *Eternal Darkness* was hugely ambitious.





» [GameCube] As recently as 2008, Denis Dyack suggested that we could see an *Eternal Darkness* sequel in the future.

## What the press thought

**Cube**
**Score: 9.3/10**
"*Eternal Darkness* is a sensational game… a startling, epic, two-millennia-long, exquisitely crafted, headf*ck."



**Gamestyle**
**Score: 9/10**
"Another essential purchase for Cube owners, with many delights, shocks and thrills in its 20-hour running time."

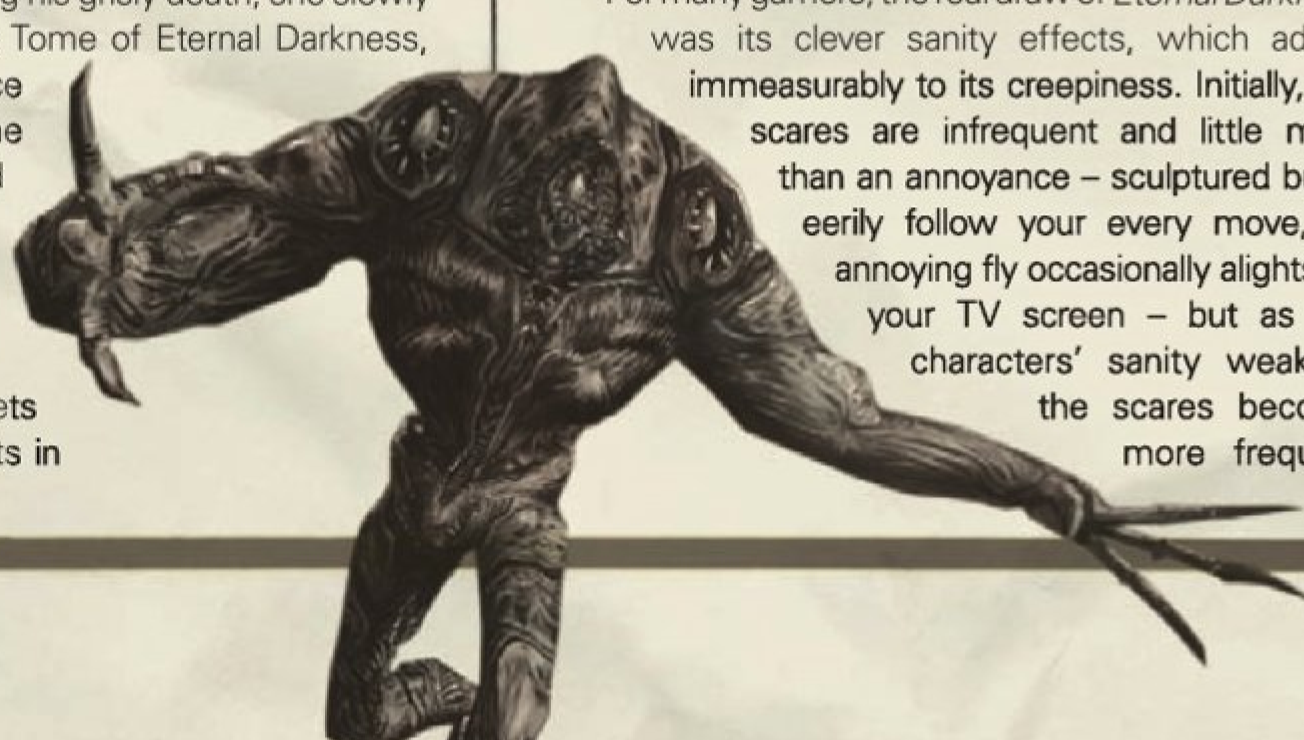
message came across. A tale spanning two millennia and featuring 12 playable characters sounds like a recipe for disaster, but Silicon Knights handles its Lovecraftian script with amazing assuredness. Denis Dyack has often stated in interviews that the story is always the most important dynamic when Silicon Knights is creating new games, and it's easy to see in *Eternal Darkness*.

Although many of the characters are only available for a single chapter, each and every one of them is just as fully fleshed out as lead Alexandra Roivas, a Buffy Summers wannabe whose present-day setting not only acts as a central hub, but ties all the other chapters together. Searching her Grandfather's huge mansion after discovering his grisly death, she slowly discovers pages of The Tome of Eternal Darkness, which in turn introduce you to the rest of the game's characters. And what a motley bunch they are.

Pious Augustus is a Roman Centurion whose grim discovery sets the game's future events in motion, Karim is a Persian swordsman uncannily similar to a certain Prince, Dr Edwin Lindsey is an Indiana Jones-style archaeologist, and Michael Edwards is a Canadian firefighter. All are wonderfully realised and each one has a part to play. The fact that Silicon Knights isn't afraid to kill a number of them off in order to enhance the story just makes their limited screen time that much more believable.

Another clever touch is the way Silicon Knights revisits the same areas in different time periods. While you'll find yourself returning to the same locations, their structure is often completely different, with the erosion of time making a huge difference to the overall makeup of each stage.

For many gamers, the real draw of *Eternal Darkness* was its clever sanity effects, which added immeasurably to its creepiness. Initially, the scares are infrequent and little more than an annoyance – sculptured busts eerily follow your every move, an annoying fly occasionally alights on your TV screen – but as the characters' sanity weakens the scares become more frequent and sinister. You lose all control of your character, only to see them ripped apart in front of your disbelieving eyes; the TV seemingly switches itself to another channel; an apparent error sees your hard-earned save deleted. It's a truly ingenious idea, as rather than annoy, the effects just pull you in further due to all the time that you've invested into your dark journey.



### WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

Although it was superseded by Capcom's *Resident Evil 4*, Silicon Knights' wonderfully creepy title holds up extremely well, and is arguably a different beast to Capcom's franchise. *Eternal Darkness* is all about the story and atmosphere. It succeeds in creating an incredibly immersive world, thanks in no small part to the effort Silicon Knights invested to make it as historically accurate as possible (with the odd artistic concession here and there). While there are large, lumbering beasts to destroy and obstacles to overcome, it's the psychological horrors that are the most effective aspect of this macabre masterpiece. There aren't many videogames that have you holding the controller with sweaty palms while your heart pounds frantically in your throat; but *Eternal Darkness* is one of them. And we love it for it.

**It wasn't so long ago that the dawn of 3D games was supposed to make 2D obsolete, and yet now we find ourselves in the middle of a two-dimensional renaissance. Whether sprites or polygons, classic franchises or all-new universes, we look at how 2D gaming is finding life again on the current generation of systems**

### PINNACLES REMEMBERED

It's a fair generalisation to make that, when speaking of any form of animation, nobody involved in the production has it easy. It's labour-intensive and requires a lot of forward-planning, lest it need be drawn or rendered all over again. Among the most arduous, however, has to be the traditional cel animation: the classical 2D stuff.

For videogames, the challenge lay in pixel art. Loops were produced and manipulated, certainly – how else would a game be playable? – but all of it, every usable frame of animation, had to be generated by the artists. There's a point in history where there was no *Toy Story*, and games instead focused their visual aspirations on *Akira* and *Beauty And The Beast*. Cast your minds back – or forwards, depending on what page you last read – to the Nineties. Specifically, keep that grey matter focused squarely on the first half.

Some of us were still making do with NES and Master System consoles, but those who were either old enough to have jobs, or whose parents were just a bit more well-off, were instead exploring what was to become a series of 2D game design pinnacles on 16-bit hardware. It was a time of sub-SD resolutions, pixelated mascots, and 64 on-screen colours.

The peak may have begun with *Sonic The Hedgehog*. After some unsuccessful mascot attempts, Sega struck gold with a game that showed off some multi-layered scrolling, and gameplay that benefited from physics-based momentum. Elsewhere, Nintendo pulled out a gun called *Super Metroid*, a title that proved that a side-scroller could provide a fulfilling sense of exploration, and an exceptional, hair-raising atmosphere. *Contra III* reminded us that people can actually point a gun in more than one or two directions. *Street Fighter II* made a case for the validity of fireballs, and the SNES hosted *Final Fantasy VI* and *Chrono Trigger* – still considered by many to be the finest Japanese role-playing games to date.

As time went by, animation, in particular, improved. By the time the Mega Drive version of *Aladdin* hit in 1993, actual cel animation, made possible through clever compression, was being used. The technique allowed no short cuts, but the results were jaw-dropping – the fluidity of the visuals still holds up today. This carried over to *Earthworm Jim*, and for a while it was difficult to believe that games could look any better, or be much more creative. You needn't look further than *Earthworm Jim HD* for proof.

Trends, however, are nasty things. They can change in the blink of an eye, and as the decade reached its midpoint, many people decided to blink in unison. 1995 saw the arrival of *Toy Story* in cinemas, and the PlayStation in



Western living rooms. Both the benchmark, and the hardware that chased it, changed with a simple turned page on the calendar. *Earthworm Jim 2*, a varied, entertaining, and downright pretty game that reviewed exceptionally well not moments before, suddenly found itself bearing the brunt of a critical sledgehammer. *CVG*, in particular, suggested that it represented great design, but then lumped it with a score of 3/10 due to, apparently, the then-present being the "Age of Polygons".

One review this may have been, but sales nonetheless represent a mass mentality. Sony built the PlayStation as a 3D machine from the ground up and enjoyed historic success, while the 2D powerhouse that was Sega's Saturn was left floundering, selling less that one tenth as many units. The truest testament to this is that two of our three interviewees, indie wonder-kid Derek Yu and Klei CEO Jamie Cheng, admit to never having owned Sega's big black box. The one who did own the console, Takashi Iizuka, was – and still is – working for Sega.

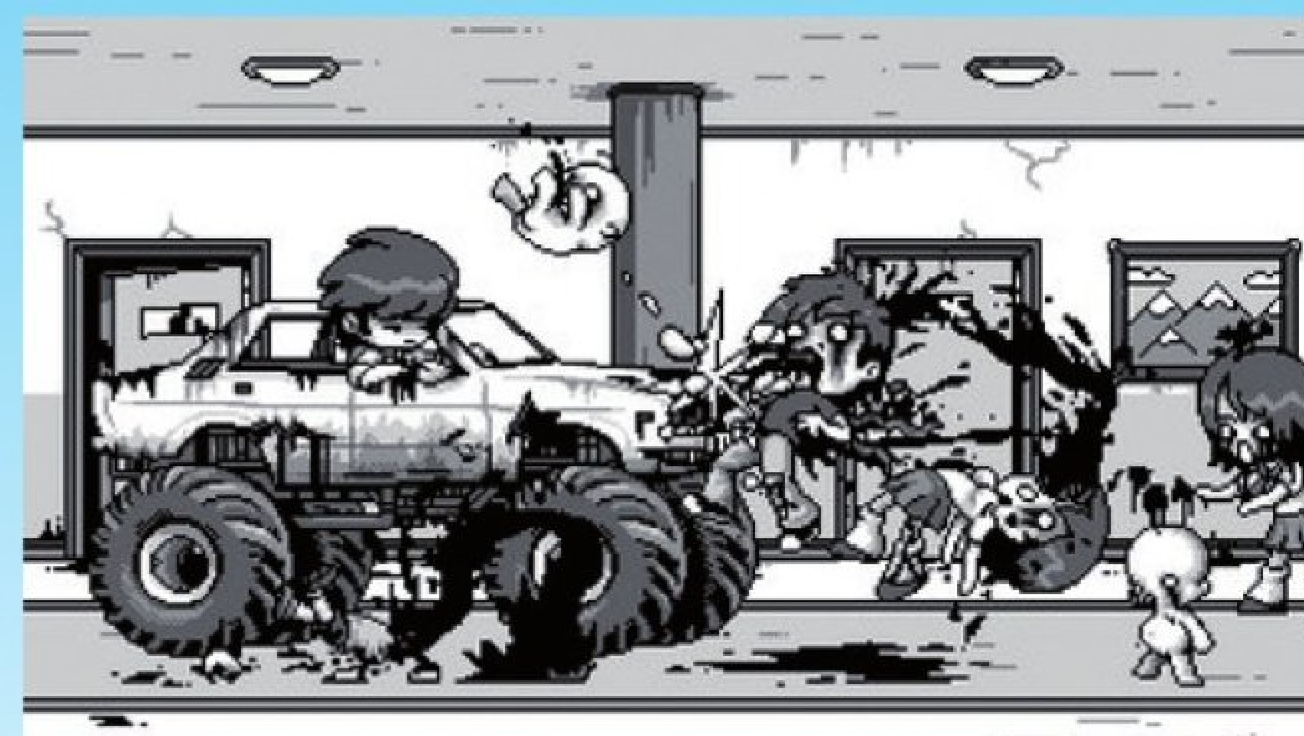
## FORWARD TECHNOLOGY

Furthering his thoughts on the Sega console he never owned, Yu offers up an unexpected and insightful piece of speculation on the side: "It's sad that it was doomed to die in the West. Hopefully those games will get re-released sometime in the near future." He told us this just days before Sega made mention of such a possibility. "Or, hell, while I'm dreaming, why not re-release the whole system? It'd probably do much better now than it did back then."

Yu may be right. It's strange, but conceivably true that, if released today, the Saturn may indeed find a more receptive audience of gamers than it did a good decade and a half ago. Polygonal graphics and sprawling, open worlds have been refined far beyond the technical novelty that they once thrived off. We've become accustomed to such things. An era that once labelled *Doom* as 'virtual reality' has been replaced by one that now, when speaking of larger screens, doesn't classify anything as 3D unless a goofy pair of glasses is involved.

The interesting thing is that, although it never really went away, 2D gameplay did a lot of growing while it was lingering underground. For one thing, we now live in a world that classifies 2D games by how they play, not by how their graphics are constructed. The concept of '2.5D' is a thing of the past, and really, *NiGHTS* is no less glorious because of this.

Neither is a lot of the Saturn's backlog. The wealth of shmups – including, but certainly not limited to, the unbelievably good *Radiant Silvergun* – alone stand to potentially sell more copies upon re-release than they did on their first run. Not that we should be



» If you've not yet watched *Pirate Baby's Cabana Battle Street Fight 2006* – a fun little gore-fest by a man who would move on to animating *Scott Pilgrim*, we suggest that you look it up on YouTube.

here and back again

» [XBLA] *Shank* – showing that only 2D musclemen really know how to hang from one arm and shoot with the other.





### THE WORLD OF FILM

☐ The timing likely lands with technology rather than coincidence, but 2D suffered blows in two entertainment media simultaneously nonetheless. The release of *Toy Story* followed not long after *The Lion King*, which would prove to be the very peak of Disney's 2D animation – a side of the company that would soon begin to decline as Pixar became more and more of a household name with every passing feature.

While it might be fair to suggest that this turn came because Pixar was simply making better animated films with greater reliability than any other Western animation studio, it nonetheless hammered a nail into the coffin of cinematic, hand-drawn artistry. 3D has become the standard, and Disney's attempt to bring 2D back with *The Princess And The Frog* was short-lived thanks to less than expected box office returns effectively killing its next planned 2D feature, *The Snow Queen*. Remorseful barely scratches our feelings about this, especially as 2D animation can still move with enviable energy and precision when produced from the hand of a master. May Studio Ghibli live forever.

At least gaming has got its renaissance. The polygons may have conquered, but at least they didn't commit genocide.

thinking exclusively about one genre, or one piece of hardware, for that matter.

It's hard to pick an exact landmark, but for the sake of convenience we'll settle with *Gish* as a game that served as the wake-up call that told gamers how, in terms of both gameplay and presentation, 2D gaming still had a lot of potential that was yet to be tapped when the whole world went polygon-mad. It was a game with sharper visuals than its brethren of old, to say nothing of the way new physics technology allowed for puzzles to be integrated into the gameplay.

Owing largely to a fast-growing surge in PC indie development, which itself was largely indebted to the opportunities opened up by digital distribution, a huge flow of quality new 2D gaming started dropping onto the hard drives of savvy gamers. *Starscape* played a unique game of *Asteroids*, *Gumboy: Crazy Adventures* took physics experimentation in a new direction and highlighted just how beautiful 2D art could look on modern technology, and *Aquaria* may arguably be a better *Metroid* game than *Metroid* itself.

Not that Yu thinks his game is particularly new. When asked how *Aquaria* might have been different if developed in the Nineties, his first response was aesthetic: "Well, the graphics might have been more pixelly! In terms of game mechanics, I don't know that it'd be that different."

That isn't to say, however, that subtle differences aren't present and accounted for: "Alec [Holowka] and I made the HUD very minimal. Giving the player a more or less clear screen was crucial to immersing them in the game's world. We also felt it was important to use as little text as possible to convey the game's storyline, because it was disruptive to the exploration aspect of the game. That was one of the big reasons why we decided to go with voiceovers." Such small things can certainly enhance – the intonation of the narration alone was enough to enhance the sense of trepidatious but curious exploration.

The team behind *Shank*, however, are a little less bashful, with Cheng cutting right to the current era: "There's a lot of things that we were able to do because we're working on a modern console – a ton of parallax layers; dynamic hue, saturation and lighting; adding subtle reverb to the audio."

The very fact that *Shank* is even a console title at all is a sign of a significant wind in and of itself. But five years ago it could have been something that prospective publishers would barely take seriously. Today, however, Microsoft, Sony and even Nintendo's download services have opened the gates for a return of gameplay styles that many had once assumed to no longer be relevant.

## "WE NOW CLASSIFY 2D GAMES BY HOW THEY PLAY"

### THE LIST GROWS

It's telling that *Shank* is, really, but one from a ton of examples of highly polished 2D games in the current release window. Using both 2D and 3D rendering methods, myriad new software is returning 2D gameplay to more than just portable consoles.

A part of this may come down to control: there's a level of digital precision available in side-scrolling worlds that 3D still struggles with. Cheng is acutely aware of this: "[We] spent countless hours on the controls of *Shank*. We wanted to have people feel that they were in complete control of the character, and so smoothness, responsiveness, and ease of use were the core aspects we dedicated the first few months of development to."

It's an old-school philosophy that still rings true. If there's one thing that 2D game design had really honed to a fine point by the end of the 16-bit generation, it was character control. Precision had been nailed, and developers are beginning to rediscover this, as well as looking for new ways to implement it.

The list of games is staggering. *Limbo*, also recently released, feels like art come to life. *Scott Pilgrim* is allowing pixel art to have its day again. Sony is continuing to see success with the *PixelJunk* brand. *LostWinds* is one of the best Wii games to date.

This, however, is just teasing the digital space. A market that has taken huge strides towards equal legitimacy these past few years, but is nonetheless still a few behind boxed product on the console frontier. What really impresses – what surprises – is the return of triple-A 2D retail product.

Not that the surge of 2D stuff shown recently – notably at E3 2010 – hadn't been foreshadowed. Sony put huge amounts of money behind *LittleBigPlanet*, and *New Super Mario Bros Wii* has managed to outsell the original *Super Mario Galaxy*, and even rattled *Modern Warfare 2* in the process. Better still, the new promises are showing spunk.

*LittleBigPlanet 2* looks set to take creation a step further, while Nintendo shocked everybody with the stunning visuals and inventive gimmicks of *Kirby's Epic Yarn*, to say nothing of the mere existence of a new *Donkey Kong Country*. And *Metroid: Other M*? That's one hell of a fusion between dimensions, there. Most impressive of all, these titles are set to be fully boxed retail releases.

"In my mind, media is mostly technology-agnostic," Cheng states with calm confidence, hitting the new market nail squarely on the head. "There are definitely trends and expectations, but people in general don't go out searching for content based on the technology it's built on. We're using plenty of 3D



» [Wii] Chaos is fun, and also, it seems, lucrative. *New Super Mario Bros Wii* sold like sex on a stick.

# 2D-3D

*Those that worked, and those that didn't*

## WIN



### ↑ METAL GEAR

The impact of *Metal Gear Solid* is such that it's still thought to be the genesis of the franchise. That is untrue, but nonetheless, when Kojima took things into the third dimension he created what is arguably the finest game the PlayStation ever saw.



### ↑ MARIO

The poster child of jumping between dimensions, Mario's foray into 3D is still considered one of the all-time pinnacles of game design. All it took was analogue control, redesigned objectives, and a bucketload of imagination.



### ↑ GRAND THEFT AUTO

Opinions on the first two *GTA* games are mixed. Some prefer the detached, faceless innocence of the eagle-eyed crime sprees, but the impact of *GTA III* and the subsequent sequels cannot be ignored.



### ↑ STREET FIGHTER

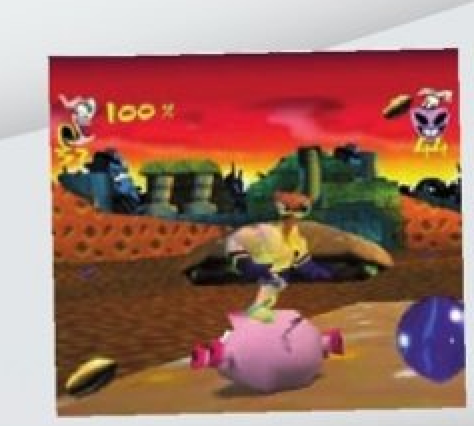
How good is *Street Fighter IV*? Really, the game is like someone was tuning *Street Fighter II* for years without telling anyone about it and then, suddenly, slapped on some HD graphics and got us excited again.



### ↑ OUTRUN

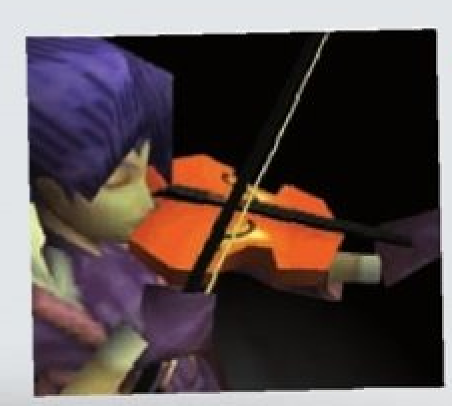
How long has it been since we declared *OutRun 2* to be the greatest racing game ever? One issue? Maybe two? Well, reset the counter, because we're saying it again. Sega nailed it with this – the atmosphere was spot-on, the visuals stunning, and the steering precise.

## FAIL



### ↓ EARTHWORM JIM

Jim's prior legacy was one of variety and of stunning animation. *Mario 64* had already proved that 3D platforming could work with some objective tweaking, so there really is little excuse for this feeling so sloppy.



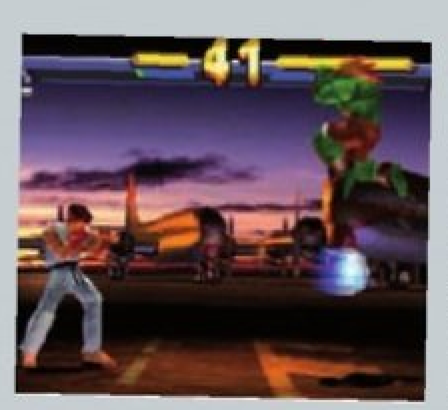
### ↓ CASTLEVANIA

We have hope for the new one, but the first foray of *Castlevania* into 3D was a joke. Being both poorly explained and featuring a helpless camera didn't do much to assist the questionable design. There's a reason why 2D iterations continue to be made.



### ↓ LEMMINGS

It's probably a matter of perspective. *Lemmings* was about planning as much as it was acting, and the ability to see large chunks of the level at any one time was essential. Simply put, this worked much better from a flat 2D perspective.



### ↓ STREET FIGHTER

Yes, *Street Fighter IV* was amazing. But do you know why? Because it played just like a 2D *Street Fighter*! *EX*, on the other hand, didn't. It was still on a 2D plane, but the controls felt loose, and all the charisma was gone.



### ↓ SHINOBI

What separates *Shinobi* from the other games on this list? The fact that it's almost completely forgotten as a franchise. The Mega Drive hosted some awesome shuriken-tossing action, but when it moved to the PS2, we all kind of played *Ninja Gaiden* on the Xbox instead.

## FROM SPRITES TO POLYGONS

☐ With regard to *Shank*, Cheng comes right out and says that the team is "using plenty of 3D techniques in *Shank*", but is aware that "nobody would call it a 3D game".

If there's a sense of bemoaning the loss of hand-illustrated animation in this article, it is borne from a passion for the energy of the craftsmanship. Nonetheless, it is amazing how much advances in technology – including 3D rendering – have allowed 2D gaming to re-enter the mainstream, armed with an arsenal of new possibilities.

Classifying dimensions has itself become a bit of a tricky proposition, and the simple fact of the matter is that we have to accept that, in the world of videogames, the term '2D' primarily refers to the gameplay mechanics, and not how the visuals are rendered. Not for a moment should the polygons present in *Ikaruga* see it classified as a 3D game, and likewise, for all its greyish Unreal Engine-powered glory, *Shadow Complex* is predominantly a 2D gameplay experience, as is the majority of *NiGHTS*.

Perhaps it's because it's less labour-intensive, or perhaps it's because 3D rendering is what new developers today know, but simple polygons have allowed upcoming indies to construct lush side-scrolling worlds for our intrepid adventuring.

techniques in *Shank*, but obviously nobody would call it a 3D game."

Whether this will hold true in light of Nintendo's 3DS remains to be seen. We've no doubt that glasses-free screen-popping technology will sell impressively by its novelty alone for a while, but we're also confident that 2D gameplay will live on, and perhaps even be enhanced by the new levels of layering made possible. Even something as simple as the art in a *Phoenix Wright* game could benefit, both in terms of general presentation and in how clues are presented.

And it's not as if this doesn't have a chance of happening. A new handheld typically heralds a new line of re-released classics.

## MAKE IT AGAIN. MAKE IT AGAIN, NOW

When was the last time you saw a Hollywood remake of an Asian horror movie? What about a remake of a part of its own lineage? Heck, what about the most recent *Indiana Jones* movie? Whenever and whatever it was, we're willing to guess that it was fairly terrible, and that the fact that you even watched it in the first place was somebody else's fault.

Somehow, videogames have managed to escape this curse. Much as sequels can, and often do, improve upon the original, remakes have recently been able to recapture the feel of their source material with unprecedented success.

Sometimes, in fact, they can outperform their 3D contemporaries. *Bionic Commando* remains a favourite, as not only did the 2D remake, *Rearmed*, garner greater critical reception, but it also outsold the 3D sequel that was released but a few months later. Likewise, Capcom repeated this reception stunt with *Dark Void* and its 8-bit-style DSiWare spin-off, *Dark Void Zero*, further validating the development of such titles.

Not that this is easy. Yu is openly excited about each remake he hears of, but typically finds himself a mite let down: "It's hard to capture what makes a game great. It's a confluence of factors – people, events, luck – that can't always be reproduced in a lab. You can't just paint over it and call it a day."

In terms of quality, while some do fall flat, Capcom's games aren't alone. *Prince Of Persia Classic* remains a worthy download for any gamer, while the Wii release of *A Boy And His Blob* is nothing shy of charming. Even *Klonoa* has received the treatment. As for *Street Fighter II HD Remix* and the upcoming *NBA Jam*, we get the distinct impression that their magic comes from an ability to capture our favourite games as we remember them, perhaps more so than as they actually were. And then there's *Cave Story* – a remake of a free PC game for the Wii that may just be a game of the year contender for some.

On the other side of this vintage coin, made shiny again after spending a night in a glass of cola, is *Sonic The Hedgehog 4*. Sega has kept *Sonic* alive and running from left to right on portable consoles for a long time now, but it's taken years of fan outcry for the company to create a true 2D title for the big home consoles, and to pick up the numbers it left behind in 1994. To date, the trailers for this game have received the greatest internet traffic of any in Sega's considerable history. This was pleasantly unexpected for the game's producer, Takashi Iizuka.

"I'm surprised that this title's announcement has brought about such a huge positive reaction like this. I really didn't expect it to be this much," he claims, well aware of potential cynicism, but also shielded by a willingness to keep to a formula that many feared was abandoned. "During the 16-bit era we needed advanced technology and innovative techniques in order to attain smooth collision detection per pixel – letting the player run through loops, for example. That then became Sonic's identity," he muses, before noting that: "After that, we've been improving Sonic's behaviour and collision detection



» [Wii] In spite of its lavish visuals, *NiGHTS: Journey Of Dreams* retained the core 2D gameplay of its legendary Saturn predecessor.




» [360] One of the challenges for *Sonic 4* has been maintaining that classic *Sonic* look and feel while meeting the expected standards for an HD game.



» [Dreamcast] Yep, *Jet Set Radio* is still looking pretty fine. We direct anger towards everyone who didn't buy it.




» [Wii] Nobody was expecting Retro Studios to be working on a new *Donkey Kong Country*, but it makes perfect sense.



## 2D OR NOT 2D

'It's like being exposed to colour television for the first time all over again,' we all thought to ourselves as the title screen and scrolling background gameplay of *Jet Set Radio* burst onto the TV. The Dreamcast had already wowed us on a few occasions, starting with *Soul Calibur* and extending further with each new offering of media from *Shenmue*, but this was something special. It was something different.

It's warming to think that the first game to use the cel-shading visual technique – one that could draw outlines around polygon models and give the impression of 2D artwork – got it so right. Since then, it's become the standard style for many Japanese RPGs, and numerous other games that simply wanted to stand out a little more.

The world has calmed down since then, and now it's just a welcome tool in a world of visual styles. Comic stylisation is cool again – it saved *Borderlands*' visuals from utter blandness, and loaned *Fat Princess* a bucketload of charm. And *Team Fortress 2*'s Pixar-like visuals? Thank heavens we now live in a world where even hardcore FPS fans are no longer afraid of cartoons. It was always a strange phobia.

» [PC] *Aquaria* – a game of discovery and wonder. It's also brilliant, and very worthy of purchase.



so that he can run even more smoothly, able to take on any kind of terrain."

And it's still classic *Sonic*, by all accounts: "We haven't done anything overtly new per se," Iizuka openly states. "The whole point of this project is to reboot the series using the much-loved 2D *Sonic* formula we have developed." Although, he is critically aware of just how suddenly this resurgence has sprung up: "I am surprised at this trend, however, as it was not popular when we started this project."

## FULL CIRCLE LOVE

Have you played *Spelunky* yet? You should have – it's totally free. It's also a hell of a lot of fun. It was also, presumably, cheap to develop, handled as it was solely by Derek Yu, with the assistance of nobody but a talking goldfish who occasionally made him sandwiches.

As generations have given way to increasingly powerful pieces of kit, and as the demand for hyper-realistic worlds has been grown by the subconscious demand seeded in the brains of gamers by the last game to step it up a notch in some way, budgets have sky-rocketed. Creating an alive, believable 3D space has become not only incredibly expensive, but also phenomenally difficult.

By direct contrast, 2D games have also grown more beautiful at less of a budget hike – *Odin Sphere*, *Trine*, *PB Winterbottom*, *Kirby's Epic Yarn* – all of these are games that have been noted for their stunning appearances and enchanting worlds, and all at a fraction of the cost of *Gears Of War*. They're certainly more charming to look at than almost every 3D game on the market, to the point where we may have to seriously re-emphasise the concept of restraints giving rise to creativity.

**"STUNNING WORLDS AT A FRACTION OF THE COST OF GEARS OF WAR"**

Most important, however, is the demand for this product. Publishers are beginning to realise that razzle-dazzle only goes so far, and that complication can turn off many people. 2D gameplay, on the other hand, has been refined and is now at a stage where developers are remembering how to do it right, replete with subtle improvements from new technology that the common man will probably never even notice. Would *World Of Goo* have been possible in the Nineties? We can't imagine the realistic physics working. Would it have sold ten years ago? It's hard to imagine that, also. The same could be said of *Mega Man 10* and perhaps even *Sonic 4*. Maybe the pen, paper and pixel animators will never find work en masse again, but we have hope that the game designers, at least, will. We'll leave it to Derek Yu to sum up our thoughts in his typically modest fashion.

"I don't think the scope has changed, but perhaps people's attitudes have. While there may have been some point in recent history when 3D was deemed superior to 2D by virtue of having the larger number of Ds, now it's just another way to play. In the indie gaming community we love 2D games, and there are lots of indie developers out there experimenting with 2D game design and trying to push it to every conceivable limit. It'll be quite a while before that potential is exhausted."

# IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



**Your mission – should you choose to accept it – is to infiltrate the base of professional full-time megalomaniac Professor Elvin Atombender.** Atombender is threatening to perform genocide through the hacking of national security computers in order to launch a nuclear missile strike. We have traced Atombender to his underground silo and have assigned you the impossible mission of putting a stop to his plan. This mission will be tough, this mission will be fraught with danger and this mission will self-destruct in six hours, so get your skates on. Oh, and make sure you take a short minute break after four hours – we really don't want Bridget from HR breathing down our backs. You know how she gets.



## AGENT 4125

The hero of *Impossible Mission* goes by the name – or, rather, number – of Agent 4125. It doesn't roll off the tongue like 007, and kind of gives the impression that the administration he's employed by is either heavily overstaffed or rubbish at spy training.

## ROVER BALL



As well as droids, the player must also be wary of these *Prisoner*-inspired electrified black balls that guard some of Professor Atombender's rooms. Far more aggressive than the droids, most will annoyingly hone in on 4125 killing him on contact.

## PROF. ELVIN ATOMBENDER



With the name Atombender, you could argue Elvin was destined for a gainful career as an evil mastermind, or a superhero. Elvin is the balding spectacle-wearing villain of the piece. From his underground stronghold he's trying to hack global security systems to launch an attack on the world.

## DROIDS



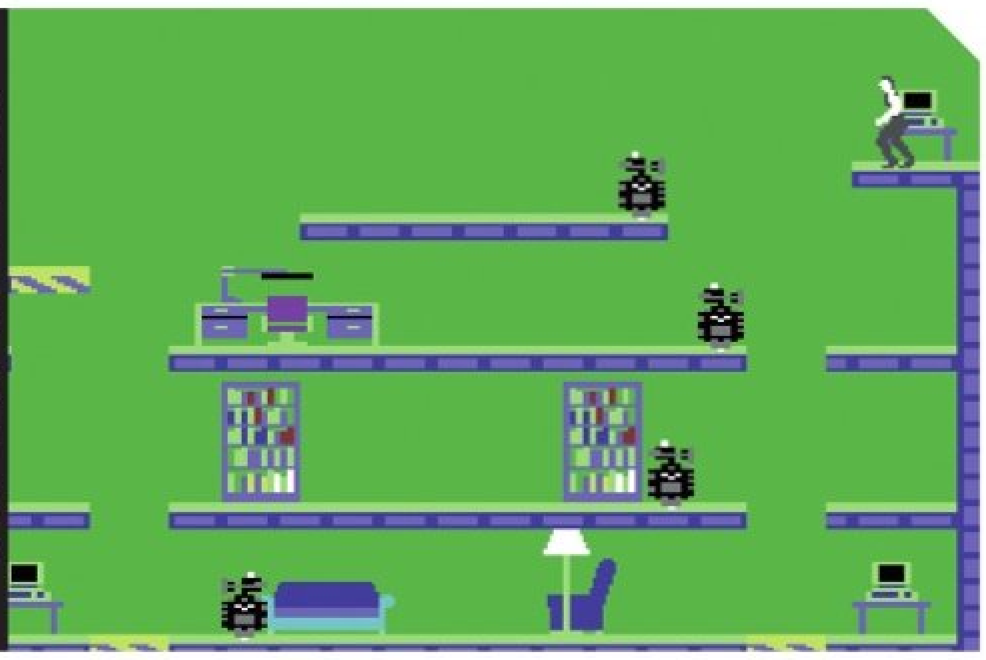
Atombender has a series of security droids patrolling his underground base to attack any unwanted visitors, such as you. These Dusty Bin-style droids have various attack types: some will chase the player, others behave erratically and some fire lasers.

## COMPUTERS



If you've found an 'init lift' or 'snooze' code then you can upload it to one of these computer terminals to either reset the lifts or put all the machines inside that room into temporary sleep mode. This makes searching objects in well-guarded rooms far easier.

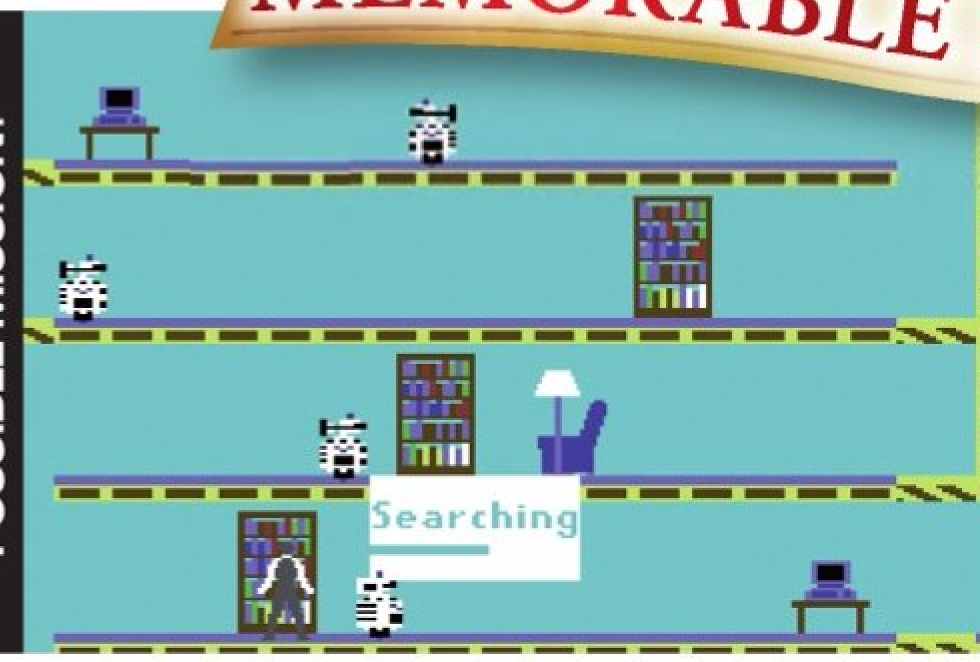
WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



## It's just impossibly good

A solid C64 classic, *Impossible Mission* wowed gamers and critics on its release thanks to a mix of great visuals, slick animation, and James Bond-style spy themes (although the game was said to actually have been more inspired by the movie *WarGames*). On top of this, the game also had that all-important one-more-go quality, brought about by a six-hour deadline looming over the player and the fact that the game's level layouts regenerated – it's the game that kept on giving. *Impossible Mission* is essentially the thinking person's platformer, and remains the ultimate espionage action game for the C64.

POSSIBLE MISSION?




## Your mission, debriefed… briefly

Despite what its title insinuates, your mission was actually pretty straightforward. Agent 4125 has just six in-game hours – with each death docking ten minutes off the time limit – to find the nine parts of a password that will gain him entrance to Atombender's control room. 4125 must venture throughout the evil professor's labyrinthine underground hideout and search his furniture (Atombender is a little careless it would appear) for the 36 puzzle pieces and then decipher the nine-letter password. With the code cracked, entry to the control room is granted and the game is finished.

STANDOUT MOMENT #1



## Mouthy megalomaniac

For many fans, the best moment of *Impossible Mission* was Elvin's unsettling audio welcome at the start of the game. "Another visitor. Stay a while… staaaay forever!" the wanton Professor cackled as the player began their mission. Arguably one of the most memorable bits of digitised speech to appear in a C64 game, it served as a chilling and telling greeting to the mission, and also filled the player with a sense that Atombender's foreboding underground lair has been a mausoleum for a number of spies in the past – quite possibly 4,124 of them, in fact.

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



## Impossible by name…

Owing to the random generation characteristic of *Impossible Mission*, the droid types, rooms and password pieces would be scattered around Atombender's lair during the loading process, completing the game could either be relatively easy or nigh on impossible depending on what sort of mood luck was in that day. However, the Atari 7800 NTSC version did come with a nasty glitch that rendered its account of the mission sometimes impossible. This version was notorious in that it would generate the puzzle pieces beneath the computer terminals, which made them irretrievable.

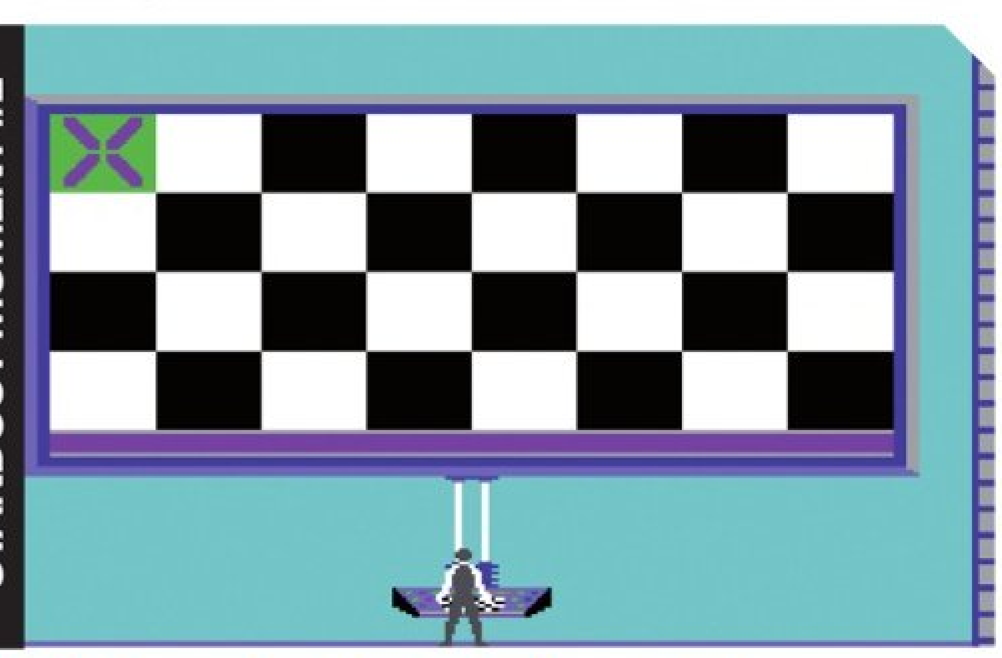
NAME'S 4125, AGENT 4125…




## The sociable secret agent

Unlike most secret agents, 4125 doesn't appear to have been given a licence to kill. In fact, he doesn't even have a licence to harass. The passive hero must infiltrate Atombender's base, and save the free world relying solely on his hacking skills, somersaults and his pocket computer. At the time of *Impossible Mission*'s release, the 4125 sprite stood out thanks to his dashing good looks and the smooth and realistic way he animated. Consequently, he fast became a popular element of *Impossible Mission* and was later reused in the game's direct sequel.

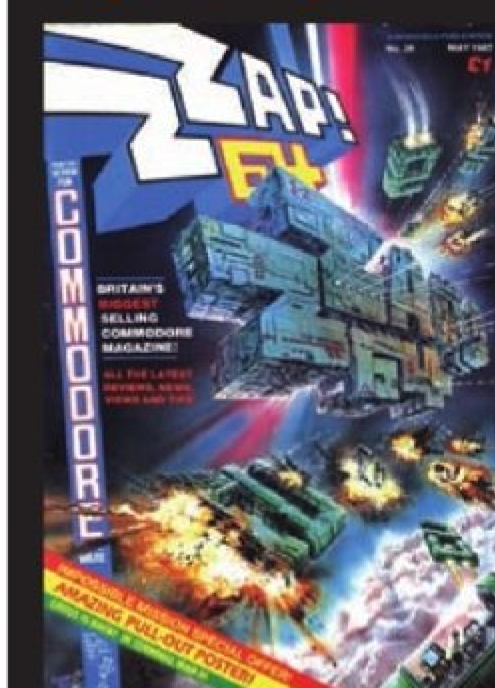
STANDOUT MOMENT #2



## A brief musical interlude… twice

During its construction, Elvin ordered the builders to install two code rooms in his base, which seem to be there for no reason other than to earn agents further 'snooze or 'init' passwords. We won't grumble, though. Kind of resembling the set of *Catchphrase*, upon entering these rooms the player has to listen to a brief musical composition of flashing squares, and, using a glove cursor, had to then replay the notes back in ascending order to win a code. You can replay this mini-game as many times as you like, although the tunes do get increasingly more difficult to follow.

## What the press said… ages ago

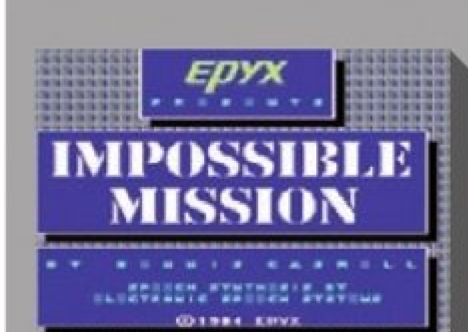



**Zzap!64**

You're looking at one of the greatest programs ever written. The graphics, animation, sound, speech and gameplay combine perfectly to create a fabulous atmosphere.

## What we think

It might be one of the C64's earliest titles, but some 26 years on *Impossible Mission* still manages to impress and feel fresh. As *Zzap!64* rightly said, it's a visual and audio treat wrapped around some great everlasting gameplay.




## IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** US GOLD / EPYX
- **DEVELOPER:** EPYX
- **RELEASED:** 1984
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



# GORF

**Long live GORF! 30 years after its heckling first reverberated through arcades, Space Avenger Jamie Fenton explains how she constructed the GORFian Empire. Paul Drury prepares to be annihilated**

» Jamie (then Jay) working on *Ms. GORF* around 1983.



> "I thought games were a new kind of motion picture. I wanted to tell stories with these things"

**It was the robotic laughter that first caught our attention. It echoed through the aisles of early Eighties arcades, drawing us to this beast of a machine, with its hefty, bomber command controller and beautiful backlit bezel. 'You will meet a GORFian doom!' it cackled, hurling fireballs our way as swiftly as it did insults. As our little ship succumbed to the onslaught, the game sneered, 'Bad move, Space Cadet', a taunt we still hear in our heads whenever we mess up in life.**

"We had lots of fun coming up with those phrases," laughs Jamie Fenton, the woman who gave *GORF* life. "Quite a few were on the blue end of the spectrum but they still had obscenity laws back then! They had to be clean but still annoying enough to serve their purpose. My favourite? 'Your end is near'. That gets a lot of double entendres."

So now we know how the bouncing bully Gorf got his bile, but the rotund robot lord actually started out as a cute character in a videogame version of a classic shooting gallery. Dave Nutting Associates (DNA) had become R&D consultants for Bally Midway at the start of the Seventies, producing, among others, the hit *Gun Fight* in 1975, a reworking of Taito's *Western Gun*. Around this time, Dave was also working on a light-gun game and created a little creature that hopped left and right for you to target with your rifle. He christened it Gorf, before deciding to turn it into a desert bird and rename the game 'Road Runner', hoping to bring out the Wile E. Coyote in players, until Warner caught wind of the copyright infringement and insisted on a name change to *Desert Gun*.

"They kind of put the Gorf character to bed and resurrected it when they put me on videogames," recalls Jamie. "My friends back in college used to call me Froggie, which I kind of liked and I accumulated frog ephemera, but no-one used it any more. Dave knew of my old nickname and thought it would be appropriate in a strange kind of way."

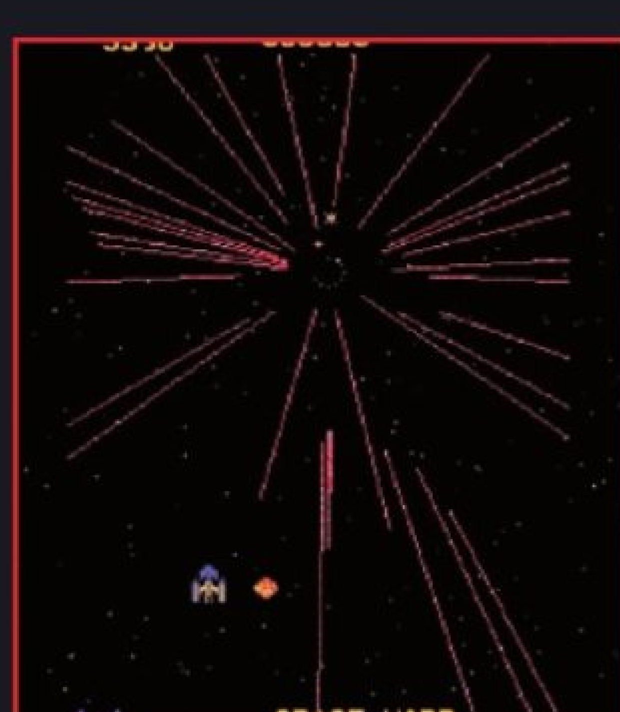
It was a sweet gesture by the boss, but then Jamie had been part of the Nutting fold for some years. She'd been introduced to Dave and his business partner Jeff Frederikson in 1974 by one of her University professors, Richard Northouse, whom Jamie describes as "a classic beer-guzzling engineering grad who thought in Fortran." Jamie had been a research assistant for the eccentric academics in his AI Lab at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, and under his tutelage she had already been involved with some early digital videogames and robotic experiments, though her first love was film rather than computing.

"I wanted to be a cinematographer, but that class was full," she laughs. "So I went for engineering. I came at games from the angle that this was a whole new scheme of animation, a new kind of motion picture. I'd crash computer classes I shouldn't have been at to use more powerful machines. My drive was I wanted to tell stories with these things."

Though she was hired by DNA to work on pinball machines and helped create the Bally Fireball, the world's first home pinball table, Jamie yearned to develop videogames. She co-created the coin-ops *Amazing Maze* and 3D driving game *280 ZZZAP*, released in 1976 by Midway, and led the team that created the operating system for early cartridge-based console the Bally Arcade. "The custom chips we built for that machine were very powerful and designed to be dual purpose," explains Jamie. "They were capable of displaying 16 colours and a 240x320 display and could work for home games and in a commercial arcade game. And we did use them for *GORF*. We ended up hacking them and making them better. That's where you get the 'sparkle': that twinkle in the shield on the first and fifth levels. Then we had an effect that put stars on the screen just using one bit. Those two cheap special effects were built into the hardware."

So now Jamie had the experience of developing for the arcades and some state-of-the-art hardware, but she was still searching for a story, until DNA decided to boldly go where many others would follow: the movie-licensed game. "*GORF* started off as a videogame version of the first *Star Trek* movie. I read the story, got really into it and tried to imagine going out to Vega… then just thought this sucks as a game idea, it's never going to work!"

The plot and licence were duly dispensed with, though not before Jamie had mocked up views of the Enterprise at various angles, which explains the similarity between *GORF*'s flagship and Captain Kirk's




» [Arcade] Were you a Space Cadet or a Space Avenger?



» [VIC-20] *GORF* did make it onto home computers and consoles but with the *Galaxian* stage absent. We have a soft spot for the claustrophobic VIC-20 version.




## IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** BALLY MIDWAY
- » **DEVELOPER:** DAVE NUTTING ASSOCIATES
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE
- » **RELEASED:** 1980
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+ FOR AN ORIGINAL CABINET

## GORF BALLS

GIVEN BALLY'S BACKGROUND in pinball, a *GORF* table was also planned, though never made it into production. "Pinball was having a big comeback in the Eighties," recalls Jamie. "I went to work with one of the big pinball designers at Bally and we had this cool idea of a hybrid. You could play the videogame part and then jump down and play the pinball game. It was like two worlds in one. You'd have a videogame mission and you'd get kicked out in a different part of the physical table. It was a great idea but you don't want to spend too much time on something that will only be played half the time! We got a breadboard working but then it got tied up in a patent battle and never got finished."

ride. She retained the space theme, though, and continued to explore her belief that games could be a new form of cinematic entertainment. "I was into D. W. Griffith and how film isn't just a stage; you can cut from one scene to another. I thought it would be cool to create a multi-episodic game."

At a time when the concept of 'levels' in an arcade game invariably meant 'do the same as before but faster, with less fuel and more baddies', this was a ground-breaking idea. It also conveniently fitted in with the commercial arrangements Bally Midway had with Japanese game developers Taito and Namco. They had the rights to distribute *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian* in the United States, and Dave Nutting realised it could use the licence in a creative way by taking elements from each game and using them as 'scenes' in Jamie's space opus. It was a neat idea and mutually beneficial (the Japanese mogul who brokered the deal then distributed *GORF* in the East), but the licence didn't actually include any access to the code for the original games.

"I was never closer than 50 feet to the actual arcade machines when I was programming *GORF*," Jamie chuckles. "We had *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian* cabs at Bally, but my development system was at the other end of the building. I'd play a few games then run home and program! Most of the time I coded at home, as the Evil Otto character from *Bezerk* actually existed – he was our boss!"

Given this disjointed process, Jamie's versions of those two arcade classics are quite faithful, at least graphically. Alien behaviour is more erratic – the UFO from *Space Invaders* is prone to stopping and reversing and the *Galaxian* horde has a tendency to swoop en masse – but the fact she didn't have to slavishly copy the source code meant she could add in her own little touches, like allowing your ship to roam the bottom section of the screen and being able to 'cancel' a shot from your quark laser by firing again. Jamie riffed on these space themes in the additional three screens she created from scratch (see 'Behind the Scenes'), most notably in the final showdown with the GORFian flagship, usually cited as the first end-of-level boss in an arcade game.

"That was where the Enterprise ended up!" she laughs. "Also, *Star Wars* had come out by then. I actually knew Larry Cuba, the guy who had done the animation for Luke flying down the trench and hitting the exhaust port. I kind of took that idea into *GORF* and it worked pretty good! Back then, people would shamelessly use other people's ideas."

The secret of *GORF*'s success – Jamie proudly notes that it was field-tested alongside *Pac-Man* in the States and initially took in more quarters – is that balancing of old

**"GORF was originally based on the first Star Trek movie until I realised it sucked as a game idea!"**



» The Heath Robinson-style development system Jamie used for *Ms. GORF*.

» A **Retro Gamer** exclusive: below is the storyboard Jamie created for a proposed television advert for *GORF*. Sadly, Bally Midway found the idea 'too way out'.

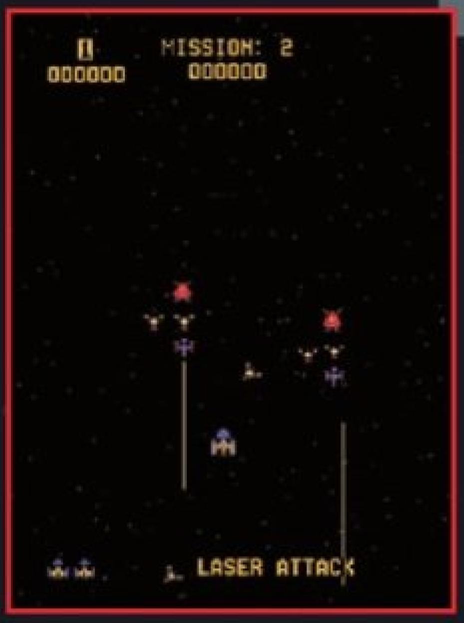





» [Arcade] *GORF* gave you extra ships if you paid double for your game. 'Like a discount for buying in bulk,' quips Jamie.

» [Arcade] GORF is actually an acronym for Galactic Orbiting Robot Force. So now you know trivia fans.

» [Arcade] 'I am the GORFian consciousness! Dispair puny mortals'






## BEHIND THE SCENES

**Jamie gives us a director's commentary for GORF's five missions**

### 1: Astro Battles

"The blue screen is because it's Earth. That's part of the narrative – you're leaving the oppressed planet and taking the battle to the enemy. Revenge! I wanted this epic tale of turning the tables on this evil empire, like *Independence Day*. We wanted to use the idea of *Space Invaders* but not promote that brand too much, hence the name change. Close but no cigar!"





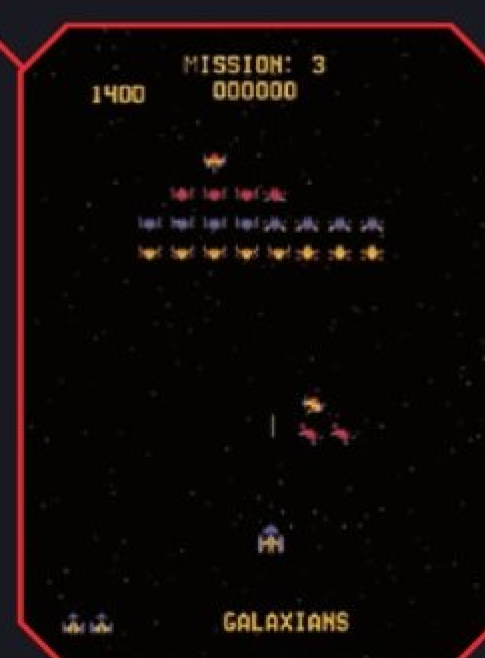


### 2: Laser Attack

"I did this little loop, which displayed a dot down the screen and another that erased it from the top and you had a laser blast! Was I aware that you could hide in the left-hand corner? I thought I had a way of stopping that, but when you've been working on a game for over a year, you just want it out so you can start having sex again or go to a movie and be a normal human being."

### 3: Galaxians

"Yeah, I spelt it wrong. You make mistakes. I mean, if someone had asked me at the time to spell *Galaxian*, I would have put an 's' on the end! I made them vicious too. It can get crazy but you can get through it. I know *Galaxian* was the first game Bally lost the rights to make copies of, so I guess that's why it didn't make it into the home versions."







### 4: Space Warp

"Was this influenced by the film *The Black Hole*? Well, black holes were kind of a new and cool concept in astronomy, though you can't fly out of one – if you could it wouldn't be a black hole! This was more based on the cosmology of wormholes and the idea of big bubble universes with pathways between them where you could come and go."

### 5: Flag Ship

"I wanted to egg on the player, to create this challenging experience where they always almost win, but never quite get to the goal. Every part of that final explosion you can find in other parts of the game. The sparkles from the shield, the lines from *Space Warp* – we didn't create a whole new set of fireworks for the finale, we just set everything we had off at the same time!"









## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**CHECKMATE**
**SYSTEM:** ARCADE
**YEAR:** 1976

**ROBBY ROTO**
**SYSTEM:** ARCADE
**YEAR:** 1981

**PITSTOP** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** C64
**YEAR:** 1983

and new ideas. We'd been blasting alien scum for several years and the game was instantly understandable, yet the surprise of clearing a wave and watching it dissolve into a fresh screen of foes with their own distinct attack patterns was something different. Add to this the incessant heckling from your enemy (thanks to a cleverly programmed Votrax chip from Texas Instruments), the epic encounter with the mothership and the striking controller and you had a game that conquered the arcades at the start of the Eighties.

"That controller was taken from a B1 bomber," adds Jamie. "Dave Nutting based it on a design we had done for the defence industry way back in the beginning. The pilot would press that red button to launch a nuclear device and then BANG!"

The spectacular explosion that follows the destruction of the flagship does provide a satisfying end to your fight, before you're promoted up the ranks and returned abruptly to screen one. Becoming a Space Avenger is no easy task – see **RG** 25 for some high-scoring tips from Todd Rogers, who held the record from 1982 until John McCann took the crown with a score of 943,580 last year.

With *GORF* providing Bally with its biggest hit since *Gun Fight*, Jamie got to work on a sequel. *Ms GORF* was developed using a pair of Z80-based computers, one handling the game code and the other the animation. "It was in pretty good shape right up until they cancelled it," sighs Jamie. "For most of the game you were in orbit around earth, shooting at this clone machine. I had the idea that your ship was like a paintbrush and you could create obstacles on the playfield as you moved around, which might speed you up or slow you down, like a game you create as you play it. It had a couple of levels but they weren't well defined. It never really came together as a whole narrative the way *GORF* did."

Jamie still has the development disks, bearing the legend 'RIP *Ms. GORF* 6/82 – 8/83', and wistfully talks of revisiting the game some day. Since leaving Bally, she has been involved in an incredibly diverse bunch of projects, from handling the C64 conversions of *Beamrider* and *Pitstop* to creating a video mixer intriguingly titled Money$hot (see **www.fentonia.com** and **RG** 13 Desert Island Disks for more). In 1995, she undertook gender reassignment surgery, changing her name from Jay to Jamie. Could the *Ms. GORF* project actually have been an indication of your future direction, Jamie?

"If you'd asked me back then I'd have said no, but if you're asking me now, I'll say yes! If you'd told me 20 years ago I was a transsexual I'd have laughed. Even up to a week before it all hit me and I had the realisation, I wouldn't have thought it remotely possible. Nowadays it all makes sense! On a subconscious level, the psycho-dynamic was definitely in play. I mean *Ms. GORF* had legs and was sexy and not afraid to be feminine… though she wasn't as slutty as Ms Pac-Man!"



» RETROREVIVAL

# Bank Panic

## EXPOSING THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE BANKING SINCE 1984

» ARCADE
» SANRITSU DENKI/SEGA
» 1984

**I first discovered *Bank Panic* on my Amstrad, where it was released by Dinamic with the far less catchy name of *West Bank* (and a bloody great conversion it was too), but later I learned that the arcades was where this addictive little shooting game first originated.**

Assuming the role of a Sheriff, you must protect a bank from outlaws while being careful not to shoot customers depositing bags of cash – though why these people would ever want to store their savings inside a Mecca for robbers is anyone's guess. It would be far less hassle and safer to simply store their hard-earned cash beneath a couple of large rocks.

Anyway, with the graphics and its first-person perspective giving it the look of a gun game, the first thing that'll likely strike you about *Bank Panic* is the fact that no lightgun is found on its cabinet. Instead, you get six fire buttons (three for each player) and a joystick. This is because the game isn't actually a shooting game per se, it's actually a brilliantly conceived game of fast reactions and good timing.

How *Bank Panic* works is pretty simple: the depository has 12 entrances (no wonder it has a security issues) with three crosshairs always poised on three of the 12 doorways. When one opens either a robber or a civilian will appear, and you must shoot the robbers while avoiding the civvies. To complete a stage you must move between each of the 12 doors helping ensure money is deposited safely into the bank through each one.

But the gameplay isn't quite as simple as that, as you are only permitted to shoot a robber once they've drawn their pistol first, and the game throws in the odd bomb (you have to snuff out the fuse on the door) and the occasional red herring to catch you off-guard, such as civilians bound with rope that must be shot free, bow-legged kids balancing Stetsons on their head and coy outlaws that hide behind bank patrons.

If you've never played *Bank Panic*, I would urge you to check it out – if you like your titles requiring little in the way of brainwork then this addictive arcade game is definitely for you. *


5




## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**RETRO GAMER** DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

# PARKER BROTHERS

Famous as the publisher of Monopoly and Risk, Parker Brothers ventured into the world of videogames in the late Seventies. Mike Bevan explores the history of the company that brought Frogger and Q*bert home

**Few toy and game manufacturers can claim a track record as enduring as that of Parker Brothers. Founded by George S. Parker in 1883, the company had kept abreast of industry change for nearly a century. It had brought fads like Ping Pong and Tiddlywinks from Europe to America, to spectacular demand. It had licensed some of the most-played board games in the world, including Cluedo/Clue from British manufacturer Waddingtons, Risk from a French movie director and, of course, the ever-popular Monopoly.**

By the late Seventies, new forms of entertainment began cutting into the leisure time once reserved for traditional board games. In 1976, at the New York Toy Fair, rival Mattel Electronics introduced *Auto Race*, the first ever digital handheld electronic game. Its designer, Mark Lesser, would create a whole line of handheld games for Mattel, including the successful *Football I*. Meanwhile, Atari was preparing to launch its VCS console, a move that would prove essential for Parker Brothers' upcoming venture into videogames. For now, the company looked towards competing with Mattel in the electronic games market.

Its first attempt, a *Battleships*-style effort called *Code Name: Sector*, was a failure – at $50 it was prohibitively expensive compared to the $20 price-tag of *Football I*. In 1978, Parker Brothers released a second handheld electronic game called *Merlin*. The distinctive red, phone-like handheld could play variations of Tic Tac Toe and Blackjack, as well as simple tunes inputted by the user. Although competing with Mattel's line, along with an electronic upstart from Milton Bradley named Simon, the game helped Parker Brothers achieve over $100 million in sales the following year.

In 1979, Kenner Toys, part of the conglomerate cereal-giant General Mills, which also owned Parker Brothers, gained the licence to produce action-figures based on the recent *Star Wars* film. The result was one of the biggest-selling toy lines in history. At Parker Brothers, product manager Rich Stearns saw the potential for licensing the rights to produce videogames for the Atari VCS. Around this time, Atari had approached Parker with the suggestion of developing VCS cartridges based on their famous board games. Parker Brothers' president, Randolph 'Ranny' Barton, found the idea intriguing, but was concerned that General Mills wouldn't like the idea of licensing to a perceived competitor. Given that Parker Brothers had recently moved from its original, cramped headquarters in Salem to a brand new complex in Beverly, Massachusetts, of which extensive floor-space lay dormant, Barton used the opportunity to solve two problems. He decided to merge the company's existing applied electronics group with a brand new in-house videogames division.

## Frogger and The Empire Strikes Back

The man given the job of building the new games division was technical manager

### INSTANT EXPERT

**Parker Brothers was** founded by George Parker, a resident of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1883. The 'Brothers' of the company name stems from 1888, when George persuaded siblings Charles and Edward to help run the business.

**The company is** most well-known for its board and card games, which include Pit, Ouija, Risk, Trivial Pursuit and Clue (based on Waddingtons' Cluedo). Its most famous brand, Monopoly, became an overnight success on its release in 1933.

**Parker Brothers remained** a family-run business until 1963, when it was purchased by food giant General Mills, manufacturer of Cheerios and Count Chokula.

**The strategy of** moving into electronic and videogames was initiated by Parker Brothers' president Ranny Barton, George Parker's grandson, in order to compete with rival toy manufacturer Mattel.

**The considerable resources** of parent company General Mills gave Parker Brothers a huge advantage in acquiring the home platform rights to properties like *Star Wars*, *James Bond*, *Q*bert*, *Popeye* and *Frogger*.

**Following the release** of *Frogger* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, Parker's first two games for the Atari 2600, the company's revenue almost doubled.






Q*BERT

## “I think I had seen Star Wars and Empire Strikes Back only ten times each by that point...”

REX BRADFORD FEELS SOME LOVE FOR THE FORCE



Jim McGinnis. One of the first employees he hired was, ironically, Mark Lesser, the designer responsible for starting the electronic handheld craze at Mattel. “I took the job at Parker Brothers in 1980 to continue the handheld work,” recalls Mark, “although Parker was simultaneously planning to build a team to develop videogames for the 2600 [VCS]. Jim hired me, and then a large amount of hiring followed. At Parker Brothers I programmed a word game, a cross between a board game and a handheld, which involved a touch-sensitive letter grid and round plastic tiles. I didn't think much of the game, and neither did PB, and it was never released. I followed that with experiments on a handheld LCD-based 3D *Star Wars*-type flying game, but the display was too slow and the resolution was too low to get dramatic 3D effects. From that point, I switched over to 2600 programming, having experienced two unpublished games, an unpleasant experience I had never had before.”

Another employee who arrived to do handhelds but who would later branch into programming 2600 titles was Rex Bradford. “An ad for programming electronic games at Parker Brothers appeared in the *Boston Globe*, and I dashed off a resume,” he remembers. “I played Parker Brothers board games incessantly while growing up, and played around with trying to make a few board games myself. I was very excited and talked my way into the job. I had no commercial experience per se, but I had done a lot of programming at the job I had in the Psychology department at the University of Massachusetts, working with the new-fangled microcomputers.”

From a slow start, the pace of life in the videogames division went into overdrive when Barton was instructed by General Mills to have a major videogame launch ready for the 1982 Toy Fair. Rich Stearns began spending chunks of his working day in arcades, researching the kind of titles that would have the most market appeal. Due to the short time-frame, it was decided that a strategy of licensing existing arcade properties was the way to go. The first arcade game to be licensed in this manner was Sega's *Frogger*, which was scooped up for the then-astronomical figure of half-a-million dollars in advances, plus royalties.

The second major release was to be an original game for the VCS based on the most recent *Star Wars* movie, *The Empire Strikes Back*. Jim McGinnis made preparations for the new games with Lesser and Bradford. “The three of us were involved in reverse-engineering the Atari,” recalls Rex. “Mark was a hardware expert and my role was writing a disassembler to peruse the assembly code of other cartridges, and to write short programs to test our growing knowledge. When the nod came to do *Empire Strikes Back*, Mark was still on a handheld game and so I got to do

### BY THE NUMBERS

**0** The number of Ewoks featuring in Parker's published *Star Wars* games.

**3** The number of game screens in *Popeye*.

**6** The number of letter 'e's in *Frogger II: Threeedeep*.

**7** The number of different console/computer platforms on which *Frogger* was released by Parker Brothers.

**21** videogame titles were advertised in Parker's 1983 catalogue, of which six were never released.

**30** The period, in days, that all Parker games were 'frozen' for bug-checking prior to being shipped.

**40** videogame programmers were employed in-house by Parker by mid-1983.

**700,000** The quantity of *Merlin* games sold by Parker Brothers by the end of 1978.

**150,000,000** The sales figure, in US dollars, that Parker Brothers optimistically predicted for its videogame portfolio by the fall of 1983.

## TIMELINE

**1977** PARKER BROTHERS ENTERS THE ELECTRONIC GAMES MARKET TO LITTLE FANFARE WITH *CODE NAME: SECTOR*.

**1978** PARKER RELEASES *MERLIN*, THE FIRST OF ITS HANDHELD ELECTRONIC GAMES, TO COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY WITH MATTEL'S FOOTBALL AND MB'S SIMON.

**1980** PRESIDENT RANNY BARTON GIVES THE GO-AHEAD TO MOVE INTO THE VCS/2600 VIDEOGAME MARKET. FORMER MATTEL WHIZ-KID MARK LESSER JOINS PARKER BROTHERS TO WORK ON ELECTRONIC HANDHELD PROJECTS.

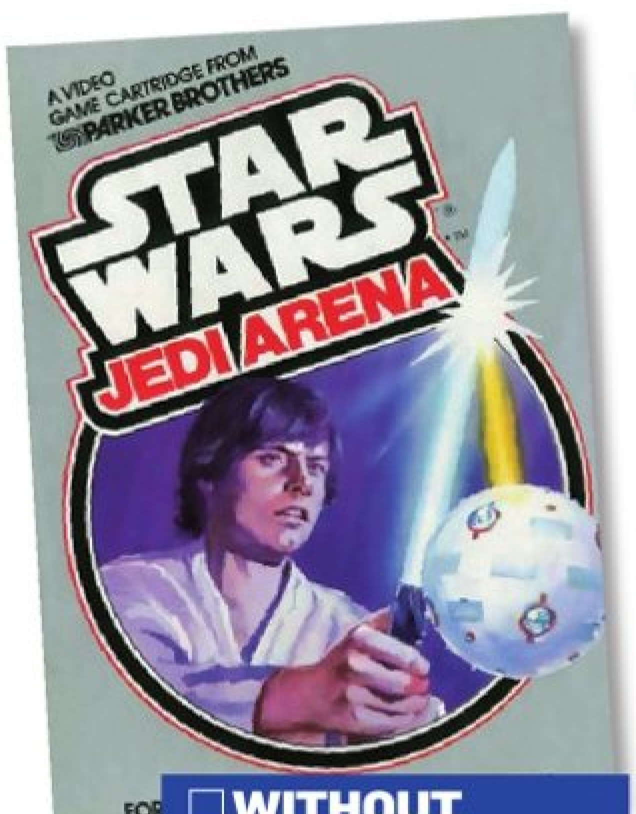
**1982** PARKER BROTHERS RELEASES ITS FIRST TWO 2600 TITLES: *FROGGER* AND *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. THESE ARE FOLLOWED BY *AMIDAR* AND *SPIDER-MAN* IN TIME FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

**1983** *STAR WARS: JEDI ARENA* IS RELEASED IN PREPARATION FOR THE ARRIVAL OF RETURN OF THE JEDI IN CINEMAS, AND THE UPCOMING *DEATH STAR BATTLE* AND *EWOK ADVENTURE*. REX BRADFORD AND THE 'GANG OF FIVE' LEAVE TO JOIN RIVAL PUBLISHER ACTIVISION. *FROGGER* IS RELEASED ON MULTIPLE FORMATS AS PARKER MOVES INTO PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT ON THE COLECOVISION AND INTELLIVISION CONSOLES.

**1984** IN THE WAKE OF THE VIDEOGAME CRASH, PARKER EXPERIMENTS WITH ARCADE CONVERSIONS FOR NEW COMPUTER PLATFORMS SUCH AS THE ATARI 400/800 AND COMMODORE 64, WITH TITLES SUCH AS *GYRUSS*, *POPEYE*, *Q*BERT* AND *CIRCUS CHARLIE*. EVENTUALLY, THE COMPANY WINDS DOWN ALL IN-HOUSE VIDEOGAME DEVELOPMENT AND DISBANDS THE BEVERLY VIDEOGAMES GROUP.

## "My biggest challenge in Spider-Man was getting the criminals to stay in place"

LAURA NIKOLICH ON THE WOES OF 2600 DEVELOPMENT




### WITHOUT A PADDLE

Parker Brothers' increasing reliance on TV advertising resulted in a peculiar faux-pas regarding the marketing for Rex Bradford's second *Star Wars* game. "The *Jedi Arena* commercial was filmed with joystick rather than paddle controllers," remembers Dave Lamkins. "I have no idea why the marketing folks didn't film with both controllers and edit together the 'right' version. I'm certain they had been warned that the controller choice was subject to change. I think the commercial was eventually 'fixed' with the addition of a brief text overlay pointing out the game actually used paddles..."

it. Ed English was brought on very soon and did *Frogger*."

For Empire, the Parker Brothers designers were encouraged to base their game around the movie's opening battle on the ice planet Hoth. "I had free reign on the 'details' like the camera motion and the '3D effect', along with the algorithms by which the smart bombs flew," comments Rex. "Sam Kjellman was the official designer and responsible for most game ideas and the artwork, and he and I both were involved in the tuning of the game as it developed." The result, a fast-paced scrolling shooter in which players piloted a Snowspeeder against marauding Imperial Walkers, was the first *Star Wars* videogame on any home platform. For a considerable time, it would also be the best.

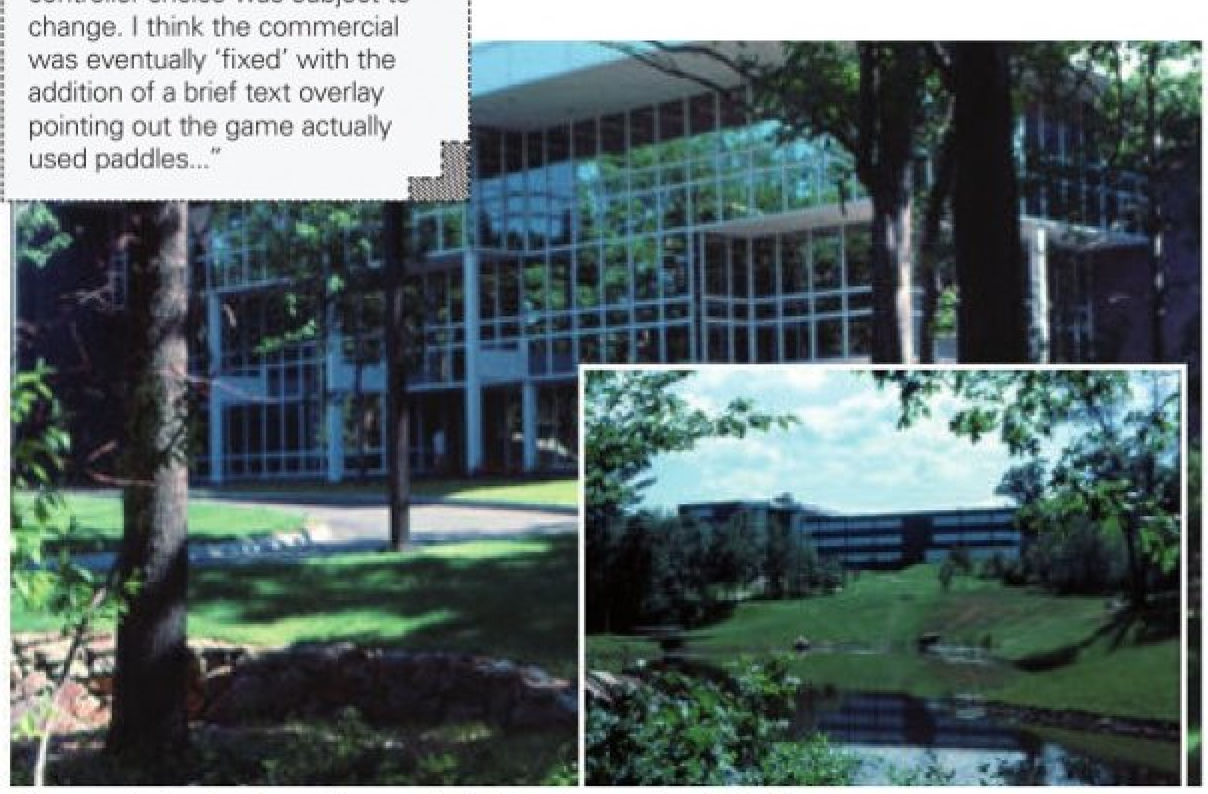
### Chain reaction

Ranny Barton quickly realised that two games weren't going to be enough to fill the product launch at the upcoming Toy Fair. "We've got to get six out this year, or more," he told executives. "Money is no object… But you've got to turn the heat up and do more." Parker execs continued to scour the arcades for prospective hits. The company entered a bidding war with Coleco to secure the rights to Nintendo's cartoon platformer *Popeye*. Other acquisitions would include two Gottlieb arcade titles, *Q*bert* and *Reactor*, Universal's *Mr. Do's Castle*, and a number of early Konami games such as *Amidar*, *Super Cobra*, *Tutenkham* and *Gyruss*. Alternative console platforms, such as the Odyssey 2, Colecovision, and Mattel's Intellivision were examined and considered. *Frogger* was later released on all three.

The Beverly office hired dozens of new programmers to deal with the influx of 2600 arcade conversions. One such employee, Dave Lamkins, came as a godsend for the overstretched McGinnis. "Jim and I actually swapped positions," explains Dave. "As I recall, he wanted to get more hands-on with the technology. My nominal role was to act as a liaison between development and marketing. The engineers really didn't need a manager; they just needed someone to keep the marketing people from interrupting them too often… I also led the project to design and build the hardware and software for the development workstations we used to load and debug code on the 2600," he reveals. "These were fairly simple devices having an RS-232 port to our host computer, another port to a display terminal and an umbilical cord to a cartridge that plugged into the console."

Another new staff member, Charlie Heath, worked on the conversion of *Reactor*, an unusual Tim Skelly creation that played like a cross between pinball and a shoot-'em-up. "*Reactor* was a fun game for me," he says. "I had a physics degree and my favourite college professor had taught us a lot of ways to do approximations, which let me fake some semblance of vectors and forces. The technical staff were allowed to spend a lot of time in the arcade room, and I learned a few of the games inside and out, particularly *Reactor*. The abstract theme lent itself well to the limited graphics capabilities of the VCS; thank goodness I didn't need to do much more than put blobs up on the screen along with a blocky containment vessel."

"The arcade room was home to about five arcade machines, the ones I remember were *Reactor*, *Tutankham*, *Defender*, and *Q*bert* (the other game besides *Reactor* which I usually held the leaderboard top score for). *Frogger* was probably still there as well. The room was strategically located



» The new Parker Brothers office complex in Beverly, completed in 1977.

» A selection of early Parker Brothers 2600 releases, with their distinctive diagonal typesetting.

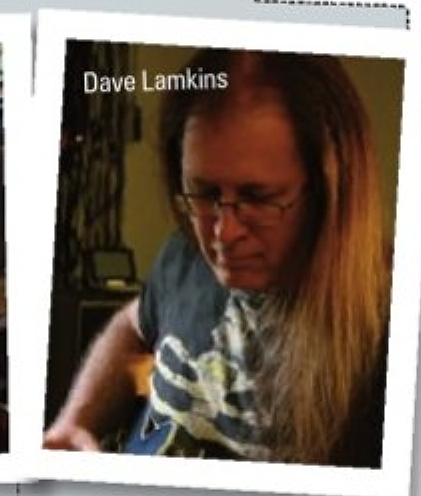




» [Atari 2600] Parker's *Star Wars* conversions were hampered by having to use raster graphics rather than the arcade's vectors.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?




**Rex Bradford**
"I've been working mostly in the game business," says Rex, "at MBL Research, Harmonix, Mac Doc Software, and Rockstar Games. I also left the game industry for a few years to spearhead the Mary Ferrell Foundation website (**www.maryferrell.org**) which I'm currently president of, and am nowadays an independent software contractor, doing website development for Direct Relief International."

**Mark Lesser**
Now retired, but ever-fascinated with technology, Mark tells us that he is currently tempted to create apps for the iPad. "The iPad is everything that I could have dreamt of for a portable device years ago," he enthuses.

**Charlie Heath**
Charlie currently runs Blue Herring Consulting (**www.blueherring.net**), a software developer focused on creating entertainment software for wireless platforms.

**Dave Lamkins**
Dave is a senior software developer at web design company Chockstone, but still finds time to pursue his long-term passion for playing the guitar. "I write and record weekly with a couple of good friends," he says. "We play out a few times a year. I'm presently assembling a CD of trio improv material and trying to drum up interest for a show."

**Rob Jaeger**
Rob is currently President of Normal Distribution, LLC, a web marketing and development company. One of his recent inventions is the online poker odds calculator PokerCalc (**http://www.pokercalc.com/**)

**Laura Nikolich**
"Currently I am a photography student. I hope to do freelance work and have my own business," says Laura. "I just want something challenging, creative and fun. After 25 years of raising kids I don't think going back to the work grind is for me. Luckily I have the freedom to pursue my passions. I'd love to have another Parker Brothers party. Maybe next summer to mark the 5th anniversary of our first reunion…"





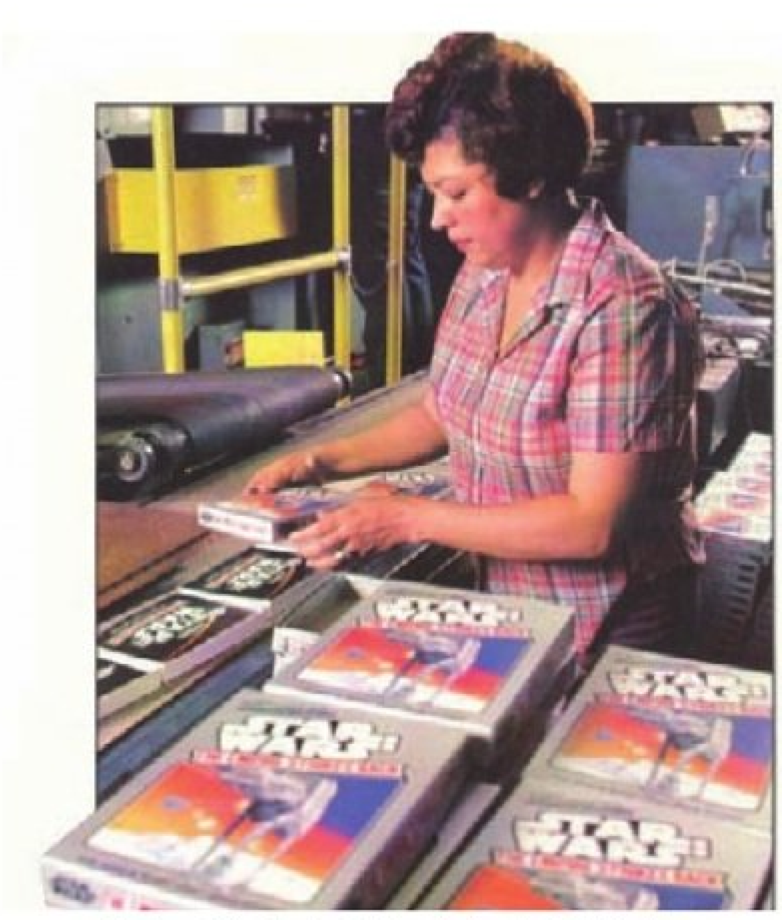


on the tech floor, which was the 3rd floor of the building – marketing and administration were on the 2nd. We walked by the arcade room on the way into the tech offices every time we came in or out of the office."

"The Parker Brothers building was beautiful," Charlie reminisces. "A glass building set in the woods with an open field on the back leading down a slope to a small lake. I guess the tech managers had window views, their offices were all along the outside of the space while the programmers were in cubicles in the middle. Time was compressed back then – the whole group had been together less than a year before I arrived and *Frogger* and *Star Wars* had just gone out the door. I was at Parker less than six months but it felt like a whole career."

## A business Marvel

Alongside the steady stream of arcade conversions (and in-house-designed spin-off *Frogger II: Threeedeep*) Parker Brothers expanded its licensing base to include other movie and toy properties. The rights to produce a game based on scenarios from some of the most recent Bond movies resulted in the underwhelming *James Bond 007*. A game based on the GI Joe toy franchise, *Cobra Strike*, was also released. The company entertained the notion of attracting female consumers, striking a deal with American Greetings to publish cartridges based on Strawberry Shortcake and Care Bears, although only one, a puzzle game called *Strawberry Shortcake: Musical Match-Ups* was ever released.



» Copies of *The Empire Strikes Back* roll off the Parker production line.

After *Star Wars*, the biggest licensing coup for Parker came when Marvel Comics granted the rights for two of its hottest properties, *Spider-Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*. The first and only title to emerge from this deal was *Spider-Man* for the 2600, which reached store shelves at the end of 1982. The game was programmed by Laura Nikolich, one of several female designers working in the division at the time. "I have fond memories of my time at Parker Brothers," says Laura. "The best thing about working there was the atmosphere of joint creativity. We received a lot of freedom and respect from Parker Brothers' management. That contributed to an environment where we were all working together and contributing to the design of each other's games."

Laura was one of a handful of designers able to apply a level of creativity to her project, rather than simply porting an existing arcade game. "I did have to work to the licence," she explains, "but it was very broadly defined and I designed the game more to reflect the limitations of the 2600, which is why it's a vertical scrolling game. The game it closest resembles is an arcade game of the time called *Crazy Climber*, which the reviewers were very quick to point out. The reason was for ease of flow in the gameplay. Spider-Man had a web of adjustable length that was calculated in real time. To achieve this he had to stay in the same area of the screen and I could scroll up or down one line at a time giving the game fluid motion. If I had scrolled horizontally the scroll would have been in four pixel segments and would have resulted in jerky game movement."

"My biggest challenge in *Spider-Man* was getting the criminals to stay in place," she confesses. "Every once in a while the they would hover a line above the window frame. It drove me crazy! Dave Lamkins tried very hard to help solve this problem but in the end I think it was shipped with that one sporadic glitch. Parker Brothers was very supporting of our efforts. The company did all it could to help us creatively and to bond. They sent us to arcades several times before it became impractical as the group was getting larger. When the movie *Tron* came out we were sent to lunch and to see the movie for game ideas." Unfortunately, although *The Incredible Hulk* was advertised in a 1983 Parker Brothers catalogue (complete with screenshot) it was never released, and remains one of the most famous 'lost' Parker Brothers videogames.

## Montezuma's Revenge

For many of the technical staff, the policy of licensing, rather than creating original games (or at least titles based on its famous board game catalogue) was a frustrating one. Before the Atari deal, Rex Bradford had been working on a version of electronic Monopoly, only to have his idea overruled. An Atari 800 version of Risk suffered a similar fate. "The reliance on licensing was explained to me this



## SIX OF THE BEST



**The Empire Strikes Back** (1982)

By far the most impressive of Parker Brothers' *Star Wars* titles, this blistering shooter echoes *Defender*'s frenetic side-scrolling action, and still remains a blast to play.



**Reactor** (1983)

Taking place in an abstract octagonal arena, players race to contain a nuclear meltdown by ramming hostile particles into control rods and bonus chambers, pinball style. It's odd, hypnotic and strangely rewarding.



**Q*bert** (1983)

Colecovision *Q*bert* is probably the most fluid and enjoyable home version of the Gottlieb arcade game, despite the monochrome character graphics, which give Q*bert and Sid the Snake a slightly ghostly appearance.



**Montezuma's Revenge** (1983)

With nine huge levels, each constructed from a pyramid-shaped stack of up to 100 screens, it'll take some trying to grab the full quota of Aztec goodies. If you don't believe us, check out the impressive game maps at **tinyurl.com/39ujg8p**.



**Gyruss** (1984)

Faithfully capturing the look, feel and pacing of Konami's innovative shoot-'em-up, the C64 version of *Gyruss* is a technically stunning piece of work, especially given how early on in the life of the machine it was created.



**Mr Do's Castle** (1984)

If you can look past the C64 iteration's chunky visuals and oddly subdued colour palette, you'll find the best home version of this underrated sequel, proving that Parker Brothers' developers understood what made arcade games tick.

## THREE TO AVOID



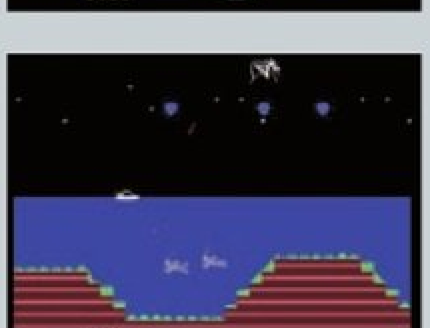
**Star Wars: Jedi Arena** (1983)

Rex Bradford's *Empire* sequel isn't entirely without merit, and the game's paddle-controlled, Force-battling lightsaber concept is an intriguing one. As Rex himself admits, the end result doesn't work quite as well as it should have, but it's an interesting curio.



**GI Joe: Cobra Strike** (1983)

This adaptation is decidedly strange, seeing players protecting troops from a mechanical cobra with what appear to be moving dustbin lids. When it was released in the UK it was rebranded *Action Man: Action Force*, despite the presence of the now-unrelated giant snake.

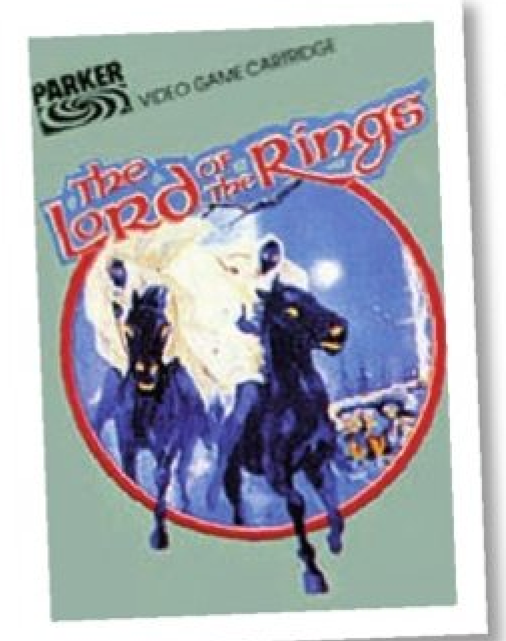


**James Bond 007** (1983)

Originally advertised as an action-platformer based on the train scene from *Octopussy*, what we got was an ill-advised *Moon Patrol* knock-off supposedly inspired by *Diamonds Are Forever*, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, *For Your Eyes Only* and *Moonraker*.

way," says Dave. "If someone copied a successful game, PB could rely on the game's creator to go after the infringers."

The company published just one original game that wasn't based on an existing arcade title, movie or TV brand; a platform adventure called *Montezuma's Revenge*. It wasn't developed in-house, but by a young programmer called Rob Jaeger. "I first met the people at Parker Brothers at the 1983 Consumer Electronics Show," remembers Rob. "I rented a small booth and was planning on marketing the game through my company Utopia Software. At the time I was 16 years old and my father operated the booth with me. We noticed people with Parker Brothers name tags frequently coming by to look at the early prototype of *Montezuma*. They eventually approached us to discuss business and how their company could handle the marketing. At first I was actually reluctant, but I was very pleased to have such a legendary games company market my game."




The original game, programmed for the Atari 400/800, featured a premise similar to Activision's *Pitfall!*, in which players guided hero Panama Joe on a quest through several large flick-screen catacombs in search of Aztec treasure. "With the popularity of the Atari 800 and its impressive graphics hardware I'd wanted to start something new and in a larger scale that would take advantage of all this power," says Rob, describing the game's origins. "I had a lot of ideas I was kicking around in the climbing/exploration/puzzle-solving genre. My friend Mark Sunshine suggested going with an Aztec theme and calling the game "*Montezuma's Revenge*" as a joke. Mark is credited in the opening sequence of the original version." Parker Brothers' faith in the game was such that it was converted to a large number of console and computer platforms, including a Spectrum incarnation re-dubbed *Panama Joe*.

### There and back again

As *Return Of The Jedi* hit cinema screens in 1983, Parker Brothers was putting the finishing touches to a fresh batch of *Star Wars* games. A deal with Atari had secured the rights for the home versions of the *Star Wars* arcade game, programmed in-house across platforms including the Colecovision, Atari 800 and Commodore 64, to varying levels of success. Rex Bradford designed the 2600 title *Jedi Arena*, inspired by a scene in the original film where Luke duels a laser-spitting Seeker orb. An interesting two-player concept, the final game was let down slightly in its execution. "It started out as an idea where you would use the Force to mind-control the ball in the middle, with a form of magnetism to control it," says Rex. "I could never really get it to work, and finally I proposed the *Breakout* mechanism we ended up with. I was never very happy with the game, for the obvious reasons."




» *The Return Of The Jedi* and *Empire Strikes Back* ads featured some pretty cool *Star Wars* art.







» [2600] The initial *Breakout*-style screen from *Return Of The Jedi: Death Star Battle*.




» A Parker Brothers reunion organised by Laura Nikolich in 2006. Left to right: Ed English, Rex Bradford, Steve Kranish, Charlie Heath, Jim McGinnis, Laura, Larry Gelberg, Ray Miller.







» [Atari 2600] *Frogger II: Threeedeep* added some brand new underwater levels… and ducks.

## "I designed Lord Of The Rings with high hopes that it would be the first in a series"

MARK LESSER ON PARKER'S ILL-FATED TOLKIEN LICENCE

A third original 2600 *Star Wars* title, *Death Star Battle*, tied in directly with the new film, and featured another *Breakout*-style concept where players piloted the Millennium Falcon through a block-like shield to destroy Vader's unfinished star-base. The proposed fourth game in the franchise, *Ewok Adventure*, would have starred the pint-sized heroes of the title in a technically impressive *Zaxxon*-esque kite-flying romp. Author Larry Gelberg proposes that Parker Brothers' management thought it better to support a single title rather than two Jedi-based releases. There were signs that the market was shrinking in response to a deluge of opportunistic videogame manufacturers flooding cartridges into stores.

Some Parker employees felt stifled by the lack of creative opportunity imposed by the 'no original games' policy. "That was the impetus behind Ed English and Ed Temple leaving to form their own company, and behind the 'Gang of Five' (Jim McGinnis, Rex Bradford, Charlie Heath, Mike Brodie and me) leaving to join Activision," admits Dave. "Parker Brothers' management had instituted a very lucrative profit-sharing arrangement shortly before all of those departures; those of us who left walked away from a lot of money. This prompted them to do everything they could, short of crediting the developers, to keep the rest of the engineering team intact. The Parker Brothers developers made a lot more money than those of us who went to Activision, got sent to the consumer electronics and had really cool development tools. A million-dollar DEC 2080 computer was coming online as I was leaving. Parker Brothers had also bought a New England Digital Synclavier – one of the very first high-end digital music synthesizers – to help with music and sound-effect composition."

### RISK AND PROJECT ZELDA

Designer Steve Kranish was involved in a project, codenamed 'Zelda', which aimed to distribute the company's 2600 game catalogue into homes via a cable TV signal. A prototype was developed, but Parker pulled the plug when 1983's crash loomed. "It had the potential to be a big money maker," says Steve. "As most of the industry discovered long ago, subscriptions are the way to make money. But as with many companies, Parker was largely a follower, not a leader. The vision was somehow there, but the required guts did not follow."

Alongside the port of *Frogger*, Steve was also behind an aborted adaptation of Risk for the same system. Like fellow co-workers, he remains critical of Parker's refusal to develop original, non-licensed games. At one point, the company sent us all to a seminar about how to be 'more creative'," he tells us. "A rather bizarre idea from a company that tried its best to discard all internally created ideas. I can proudly say that I was kicked out of the seminar!"

Ranny Barton's 'money is no object' stance didn't last. The most intriguing casualty of the rapidly dwindling 2600 market was a licence of Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings*, Mark Lesser's final project at Parker Brothers. "I designed *Lord Of The Rings* with high hopes that it would be the first in a series," explains Mark. "The Hobbits were on the run to Rivendell, with the Black Riders in close pursuit. The game was completed, including packaging, and then, once again, the axe. I think the game was too ambitious for the limited graphic bandwidth of the Atari, but there were no doubt overriding business reasons for not publishing it. The only game I remember getting out the door was *Frogger II*. The game was somewhat successful, but it was shortly after that the odd conglomerate of quirky game programmers on the top floor of Parker Brothers' headquarters in Beverly, Massachusetts was disbanded – a story unto itself."



The internal games division gone, Parker Brothers flirted with console publishing following a minor deal in 1987 to produce titles for the Master System, including an update of *Montezuma's Revenge*. In the Nineties, under the ownership of Hasbro, it outsourced some of its well-known properties – Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit and Risk – but never again would it pool its resources so spectacularly into videogames as it had in the early Eighties. "The company was swimming in an unfamiliar pond, and never seemed to have a game plan," reflects Mark, sadly. "They could have got cool games out of this group if they'd had some vision, but there just was none." Perhaps those involved can find solace in what George Parker once said: "Games help the world along. Making games is something you can look back with pride, and not a particle of regret."

# THE UNCONVERTED

*Arcade games that never made it home*

IN DEPTH




» Lucky and Wild's reactions to the chaos are displayed in the car's rear-view mirror, which even shows enemy vehicles approaching from behind.

» The game's viewpoint plonks you right inside the car, and the dashboard and bonnet gradually deteriorate if they take too much gunfire.

» Each level begins with the boss shooting away the windscreen before making his escape, leaving Lucky and Wild to give chase while picking glass from out of their mullets.




## LUCKY & WILD

■ **Developer:** Namco ■ **Year:** 1992 ■ **Genre:** Racing/shooting

■ **It should be pretty clear from just a quick glance at these screenshots that *Lucky & Wild* was Namco's take on Taito's popular pursuit racer, *Chase HQ*. But it was made the better game – according to one in-house member of Retro Gamer, anyway – by one strikingly simple factor: simultaneous two-player.**

*Lucky & Wild* was an over-the-top, high-octane on-rails thrill ride that allowed two people to experience the sensation of being in a high-speed car chase, shooting at criminals, smashing windows, and administering law and order the Hollywood way: with deft driving and gunfire.

Lampooning bromance action cinema, Namco cribbed heavily from buddy cop films, such as *Lethal Weapon* and *Tango & Cash*, to great effect. The game's wafer-thin story told the tale of two chalk and cheese police officers – one named Wild, who sported an Axel Rose-style blond fountain mullet; the other, Lucky, dressed in a smart white suit and slick black hair – on a mission to bring down a criminal drug ring called 'Big Cigar'.

Each of the game's five stages kicked off with an amusing preamble, which saw the level's boss turn *Lucky & Wild*'s car windscreen into razor-sharp confetti before making his escape, setting the scene brilliantly for the chaos ahead. The two cops had to then pursue their target on a thrilling on-rails car chase and arrest the suspect by sticking enough bullets into his vehicle that it started to resemble a metal sponge.

As well as its unsubtle action movie sensibilities, *Lucky & Wild* was also made conspicuous by its steering wheel and dual-pistol controls. They allowed either one skilful player to drive and shoot simultaneously, or, as it was clearly meant to be experienced, with one person concentrating on the driving while a pal wielded both guns. The latter play method offered a real sense of being in your own buddy cop film and afforded you enough breathing time to shout nonsensical action movie quips during the chaos too.

Why *Lucky & Wild* never found a home release will probably remain a mystery. We can only surmise that it might have had something to do with the game's busy control system, as a home equivalent would have been essential to re-creating the game's charm, but would have also been costly. That the game was quite hard to come by indicates that it probably wasn't a terribly successful release anyway, and that's a real shame, as it remains one of the most entertaining arcade action racers ever designed.




### CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**CHASE HQ** 1988

If you want to experience the thrill of chasing perps from behind the wheel of a souped-up police car then the alternative can only really be the title that popularised the idea: Taito's sublime *Chase HQ*. Owing to its popularity and classic stature, the game has been ported to pretty much every machine under the sun.

# NY CAPTOR

■ **Developer:** Taito ■ **Year:** 1985 ■ **Genre:** Gun game



» [Arcade] The third stage of *NY Captor* is clearly inspired by Taito's arcade smash, *Elevator Action*.

**■ Playing like a mixture of *Elevator Action* and *Point Blank*, this is notable for being the first lightgun game to be released by Taito.**

Assuming the role of a super cop who is on a mission to cleanse a city of goofy olive-suited gangsters, the game is split between three looping stages, kicking off outside a luxury mansion, moving on to a city street, and then ending in an assault on a high-rise building. The game is littered with various ways to earn extra points, and score attack fans will be aiming to avoid shooting the hapless civilians who resemble Shigeru Miyamoto, blast balloons, hit lights onto the heads of enemies, and hone their shooting skills in the game's *Generation Game*-style conveyor belt bonus rounds. And typical of Taito, Chack'n, Ms Chack'n and Monsta (aka Baron Von Blubba) from *Chack'n Pop* – the developer's spiritual forerunner to *Bubble Bobble* – also make welcome cameo appearances during the game.

With the exception of *Elevator Action*, Taito's second wave of Eighties arcade titles were more popular than its first, and this is true for *NY Captor*. It's an enjoyable game, but one that feels a little basic compared to Taito's *Operation Wolf* – perhaps why it was never ported to home computers and consoles.

## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

### POINT BLANK 1994

Looking for a comical gun game that did make it out of arcades? Then look no further than *Point Blank*, which fits that bill rather nicely. Ported to the PlayStation, Namco's shooting gallery shooter shares *NY Captor*'s love for firearm-related humour.




## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

### AERO FIGHTERS 1992

Video System's excellent top-down shooter is very similar in looks and gameplay to *Fighter & Attacker*, and was ported to the Super Nintendo. As such, this manic war shooter is a great converted alternative. It's also a better game, which is always good.



# FIGHTER & ATTACKER

■ **Developer:** Namco ■ **Year:** 1992 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up


» [Arcade] The number of planes to fly puts most shmups to shame.

**■ And the Namco obscure game dig continues with this solid vertical-scrolling plane shooter from the Japanese developer, which fans of *1942* and *Aero Fighters* (aka *Sonic Wings*) should certainly take time to investigate. Unlike most shoot-'em-ups, *Fighter & Attacker* featured no power-ups, and instead offered a dollop of variety by giving the player a staggering choice of 16 planes to pilot, which must surely be some kind of record, and all with subtly different primary and secondary fire types.**

Its gameplay is probably most comparable to Namco's *Xevious*, with the player having to rely on both gunfire to destroy airborne threats as well as air-to-surface missiles to take out enemy vehicles on the ground. Unlike *Xevious*'s Solvalou, however, some planes in the game will automatically lock on to ground enemies, saving you the job of having to move the reticule over your target. Also, and though it does come across as a bit of an afterthought, Namco included a hostage-rescue element to the gameplay, which seems to do nothing other than just beef up your high score and make you feel a little more heroic. Overall, *Fighter & Attacker* is a decent shooter, but its bland looks and setting is what probably saw it get overshadowed by far more appealing shooters, and is perhaps why no home release of the game was ever considered by Namco.

## BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

# NIGHT STOCKER

■ **Developer:** Bally Sente ■ **Year:** 1986 ■ **Genre:** Racing/shooting

**■ If *Lucky & Wild* is the crazy, chaotic, rock-and-roll *Tango & Cash* example of the steer-and-shoot-stuff genre, this earlier example by Bally Sente is its sedate, sci-fi, *Lost In Space* equivalent. Steering a futuristic turreted car across the surface of a desolate planet, you must simply drive around and collect coloured gems to replenish your ammo and shield while shooting nondescript alien bugs.**

With this then eye-catching coin-op housing a gun and steering wheel, *Night Stocker* was likely a case of the cabinet doing all the grunt work to attract paying punters, and, as such, it's little wonder the game failed to find a home release, as if you take away the novel control system there's very little to the game. Further harming its cause, of course, is the fact that it was christened with the most unexciting title you could think up for a driving action game. *Night Stocker* – seriously? It sounds like some kind of overnight stocktaking simulator.



# PILOTWINGS 64

**Although Mario 64 was the game that effectively sold the N64 to the gaming masses, many Nintendo fans will tell you it was another launch title that had a more lasting impact. Damien McFerran takes to the skies with the definitive console flight simulation**




## IN THE KNOW

» **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO/ PARADIGM SIMULATION

» **PLATFORM:** NINTENDO 64

» **RELEASED:** 1996

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-£10

**In recent years, Nintendo has made a habit of aligning itself with external studios in order to complete notable projects. We've seen fruitful unions with the likes of Sega (*F-Zero GX*), Capcom (*The Legend Of Zelda: Minish Cap*) and more recently Team Ninja (*Metroid: Other M*), illustrating that despite its lofty reputation within the industry, the modern Nintendo isn't afraid to look outside its own internal resources to get the job done.**

However, back in the mid-Nineties this kind of policy was far less common, a fact which is evidenced by the intense sceptism that surrounded the development of *Pilotwings 64*. The 3D flight simulator – which followed on from the much-loved SNES original – was to be coded in collaboration with American 'visual technology' studio Paradigm Simulation, a company with no prior experience of producing videogames. It's little wonder that dedicated Nintendo fanboys were practically quaking in their boots.

A member of Nintendo's fabled 'Dream Team', Texas-based Paradigm wasn't created with interactive entertainment explicitly in mind. "The company was founded in 1990 by Ron Toupal, Mike Engeldinger and Wes Hoffman," explains Dave Gatchel – who acted as Paradigm's Project Manager on *Pilotwings 64*. "We focused on providing commercial products to assist graphics developers in creating simulation and training applications. We also produced and delivered 'turn-key' applications, such as flight simulators, human factors analysis simulations and 3D visualisation applications." The studio's work brought it to Nintendo's attention, although this interest manifested itself long before *Pilotwings 64* was on the drawing board.

"In 1994 we were approached by Nintendo regarding its new 64-bit console system" continues Gatchel. "At that time, Paradigm developed products based on the Silicon Graphics (SGI) line of workstations. Nintendo was looking for select companies with 3D graphics experience, and discovered us through their relationship with SGI. We were first approached by one of our close contacts at SGI to gauge our interest. Once we confirmed that we were interested in the opportunity, SGI set up a meeting with Mr Genyo Takeda, who was our primary contact at Nintendo.

Following that meeting, we started meeting regularly with SGI to study the architecture and work within a software emulator."

The two companies certainly made for an unusual pairing, but just as had been the case when Nintendo approached UK-based Argonaut Software to produce the Super FX chip for the SNES, it was clear that the Japanese giant was interested primarily in Paradigm's expertise in the realm of 3D – a world where Nintendo was still not 100 per cent confident. "At the time, it was clear that Nintendo's interest in us was due to our experience in 3D graphics," admits Gatchel. "We had very little experience developing games and no experience developing console games. Nintendo approached us knowing that we already understood most of the issues related to the 3D technology, and that they would need to help us understand the issues surrounding game design. Also, several of us had previous experience working with CGI during the integration of new hardware, which might have been perceived as an advantage."

However, before a single polygon was rendered in *Pilotwings 64*, Paradigm had to endure months of labour without even knowing for sure that it would be selected to continue working on Nintendo's latest machine. "Prior to starting on *Pilotwings 64*, the team was very small and focused on creating an engine within the N64 emulation system," says Gatchel. "This continued for approximately nine months, at which time we were notified that Nintendo had selected Paradigm as the developer that it would like to work with SGI to integrate the N64 hardware. We sent a team out to SGI for six weeks, consisting initially of four people: Mike Engeldinger (lead software), Wes Hoffman (lead art and visual effects), Mike Panoff (software), and me (project management), and later we brought out Aaron Hightower (audio)."

> **"We were actually quite a way into development before we knew it was going to be Pilotwings 64"**

The next big task was to get some kind of tech demo running to display at the forthcoming 1995 E3 show, in order to demonstrate the clout of the upcoming console. "We decided to implement a helicopter application for the demo, so the team initially worked on getting this running on the software emulator," says Gatchel. "The custom graphics chips arrived later than expected, leaving ten days to get the application running on the actual hardware, so the final couple of weeks was particularly intense."

This phase of development was characterised by testing, pushing the new hardware and finding out what it was capable of. "Following the integration effort at SGI and E3 1995, Nintendo started giving us a series of experiments to work on," reveals Gatchel. This research would eventually evolve into the game we know and love today. "We were actually quite a way into development before we knew it was going to be *Pilotwings 64*," comments Mike Engeldinger. "Nintendo suggested that we think of flying concepts without any mention of *Pilotwings*. We did prototypes of flying reptiles, island hopper helicopters, biplanes and the like." As these experiments dovetailed into something more and more grandiose, the truth was finally revealed to the team. "After several months of this it let us know that we would be developing *Pilotwings 64*, with the goal of it being a launch title," says Gatchel.

During development the duties were evenly split between the two firms; Nintendo handled the game design while Paradigm was responsible for the technology.



## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX**
**SYSTEM:** N64
**YEAR:** 1998

**SPY HUNTER**
**SYSTEM:** PS2
**YEAR:** 2001

**STUNTMAN: IGNITION** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** 360/PS3
**YEAR:** 2007




» [N64] Character in the game were named after birds.







» [N64] Not all of the methods of flight in the game were mechanical; witness the glory of the Birdman suit.

» These assets were apparently intended for Factor 5's Wii *Pilotwings* sequel




> "Once it became clear Nintendo was counting on us to deliver a launch title… there was some pressure"

Gatchel explains that they had little reason to complain with the balance of this relationship. "Since it was our first game, we had limited experience as game developers," he says. "Prior to *Pilotwings 64* our strength had been high-end 3D graphics, developing tools and applications for the simulation and training industry. As a result, we worked with the design staff from Nintendo. Our initial contact was Mr Takeda, who at the time managed Nintendo's R&D3 group and was in charge of the overall N64 development. On the design side, the lead designer was Makoto Wada, who was a member of Miyamoto's design group. During the production, we learned a great deal from working with Nintendo, not just about game design specifically, but also about producing games in general. The schedule was intense and the stakes were quite high for us, but overall it was a lot of fun."

One of the N64's biggest selling points was its analogue controller, which was incredibly innovative at the time. For Paradigm the pad was perfect for what it had in mind for *Pilotwings 64*. "Our background in visual simulation and vehicle modelling always involved using control sticks, and at the outset we simply designed our vehicles to fly using them," explains Engeldinger. "I don't think we even considered doing it any other way because there simply is no substitute for accurate control without one."

As the schedule became ever more demanding, Gatchel and his team were able to inject more influence into the creative side of the project. "Nintendo was leading the design effort; however, [it was] willing to consider suggestions from the team," explains Gatchel. "In some respects, since the schedule was so tight, it really became necessary for the design and production team to work collaboratively. What sticks out for me was the schedule; our goal was to be a launch title, and to achieve that it took an incredible effort from the entire team, really the entire company. During the last four to five months, it wasn't unusual for the majority of the team to work through most of the night. Everyone really extended themselves to the limit."

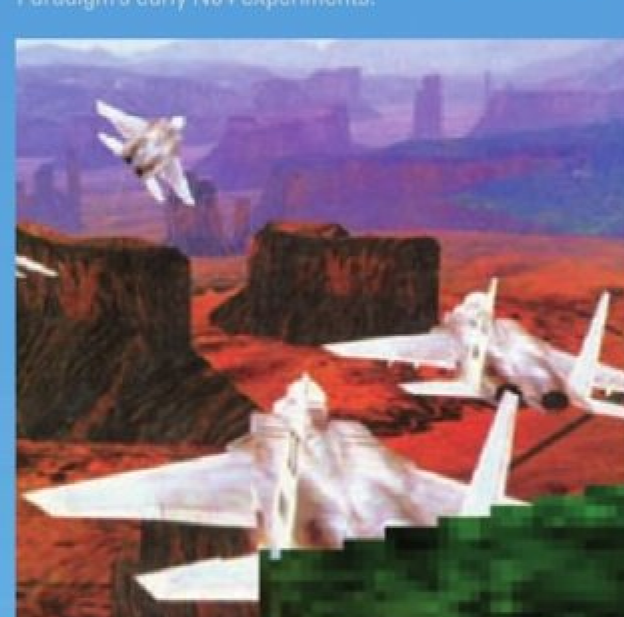
Unsurprisingly, the team began to feel the burn of this punishing development period. "Initially everything related to the industry was so new to us I honestly don't think we felt a great deal of pressure," says Gatchel. "Later, once it became clear that Nintendo was counting on us to deliver a launch title and it would only be *Mario 64* and *Pilotwings 64* at launch, there was some pressure." This wasn't helped when members of Paradigm's team were shown the game that would ultimately define the N64, and the one they would be launching *Pilotwings 64* alongside. "I remember about halfway through the development when we got a sneak peek at *Mario 64*," says Engeldinger.

## Nester's Quest

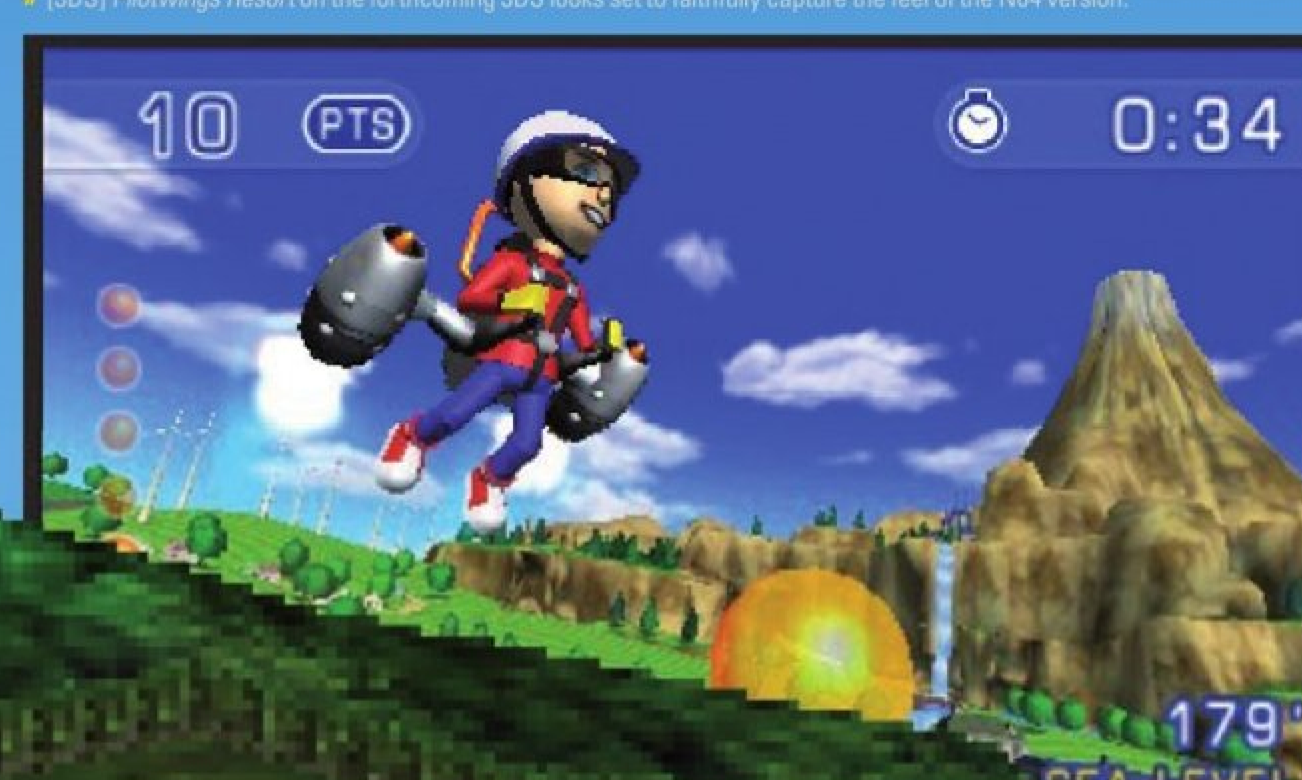
NESTER MAY NOT be a name which is familiar with British Nintendo fans, but in the US this goofy-looking character was something of a mascot for the popular magazine *Nintendo Power*. Created by one-time editor of the magazine and self-proclaimed President of the Nintendo Fun Club Howard Phillips, Nester even went on to star in a couple of games, the most infamous being *Nester's Funky Bowling* on the Virtual Boy. When *Pilotwings 64* launched many eagle-eyed players noticed the astonishing similarity between the character of Lark and Nester. *Nintendo Power* gleefully reported his true identity in its September 1996 issue, although members of the Paradigm team are regretfully clueless on the matter. "I can't confirm or deny that," says Mike Engeldinger when quizzed on the origins of Lark. "The characters came in very late in the game, and appeared like magic from sketches that we received from Nintendo one day; prior to that we had generic stand-ins for the pilots." It seems that for the time being, *Nintendo Power*'s assertion that Lark is Nester will have to stand. Nester has since been honoured by having a NES emulator named after him.




» This tech demo – codenamed VX Vampire – was one of Paradigm's early N64 experiments.



» [3DS] *Pilotwings Resort* on the forthcoming 3DS looks set to faithfully capture the feel of the N64 version.







» [N64] That plucky plumber gets everywhere these days.


» Genyo Takeda – seen here brandishing a GameCube – was Paradigm's main point of contact with Nintendo during development.

"We were shocked at the gameplay and production quality compared to where we were."

However, they needn't have worried. When *Pilotwings 64* hit store shelves the critical reception was overwhelmingly positive, and it went on to shift over a million copies. Gatchel admits he was somewhat taken aback by the reaction: "Frankly, it was shocking… It was gratifying at the time that it was so well received. Now, I'm just proud to be able to say I played some role in a product that people remember fondly. I'm very proud of the overall quality combined with being a launch title. Specific to the game, I think the team did a great job with the graphics, showcasing some of the platform's abilities."

Following the triumphant launch of *Pilotwings 64*, Paradigm Simulation was split into two firms – one of which was to concentrate on tech and the other on video game development. Paradigm Entertainment continued to develop for the N64, producing *Aero Fighters Assault* and assisting Video System with its popular *F1 World Grand Prix* racing titles, but strangely it never worked as intimately with Nintendo again.

"We continued to maintain a close relationship with Nintendo following the release of *Pilotwings 64*, though not as a first-party developer," explains Gatchel. "From our standpoint, we wanted to grow the business and felt that working with numerous publishers and multiple platforms would help mitigate our business risk. At the time, development teams were small enough that we were able to run multiple productions, and it wasn't uncommon for us to work with as many as three publishers simultaneously." Although a sequel to *Pilotwings 64* was mooted in 1997 it never materialised. Sadly, the harsh realities of being an independent studio eventually caught up with the company. "We had a great run as an independent developer, producing some great games and operating profitably every quarter of our existence prior to selling the business," says Gatchel. "We elected to sell to Atari in 2000, at which point we were no longer entirely in control of our direction." Following a staff exodus, Atari offloaded the studio in 2006 to THQ, and in 2008 Paradigm closed its doors.

Despite the sad end to Paradigm's story, Gatchel has a surfeit of happy memories. "Working on *Pilotwings 64* was truly a great experience," he says with a grin. "Overall, Nintendo was one of the most professional and supportive organisations that I've had the pleasure of dealing with. [It] introduced us to game development, and [was] a great mentor on what it takes to produce great products and to survive in the industry." Engeldinger agrees. "It was a pleasure and an honour to work with such thoughtful and dedicated people. Although Mr Takada provided us with overall vision and core gaming principles – I recall his famous quote to us: 'the player must be king' – Mr Wada was the one that really shaped *Pilotwings 64* through very hard work and much personal sacrifice. Nintendo basically taught us the fundamentals of game development and the gaming industry, including the entire development process. Through *Pilotwings 64* we evolved from a boutique application developer to a mainstream game developer; this would not have been remotely possible without the patience and guidance of Nintendo."

**Special thanks to Greg Noe for providing the screenshots used to illustrate this feature.**

## The future of Pilotwings

DESPITE THE SUCCESS of the SNES and N64 editions of *Pilotwings*, the series has been in limbo for several years now. An N64 sequel was confirmed in 1997 but then vanished without trace. In 2003 it was rumoured that Factor 5 – the studio behind the popular *Star Wars Rogue Squadron* series – was busying itself on a GameCube update of the series. Development was supposedly shifted to the Wii when it launched a few years later, and apparently the title was completed on the platform. However, Nintendo refused to publish the game and with Factor 5's unfortunate closure, it's looking very unlikely that it will ever see the light of day – if indeed it even exists. At present the only hope for the franchise is *Pilotwings Resort*, which is mooted as an early release for Nintendo's forthcoming 3DS handheld.






# SAME NAME DIFFERENT GAME

**When going by that front cover simply isn't enough**





## Case 12: Bionic Commando

**FEATURED SYSTEMS:** ARCADE, NES, GAME BOY, X360

**YEAR RELEASED:** 1987 - 2009

**With an acrobatic** hero who, it turns out, isn't all that flexible, the original Bionic Commando is a bit of a flawed classic. It was a thinking that wasn't lost on Capcom either as its second throw of the dice showed us how the game should've been done in the first place, ironing out the creases and producing a unique NES reworking that pushed the series into Mega Man levels of celebrity on the console. Here's the longer version of what we've just said...

» [Arcade] It might be hard and control like a pack of wild horses, but at least the music's good.

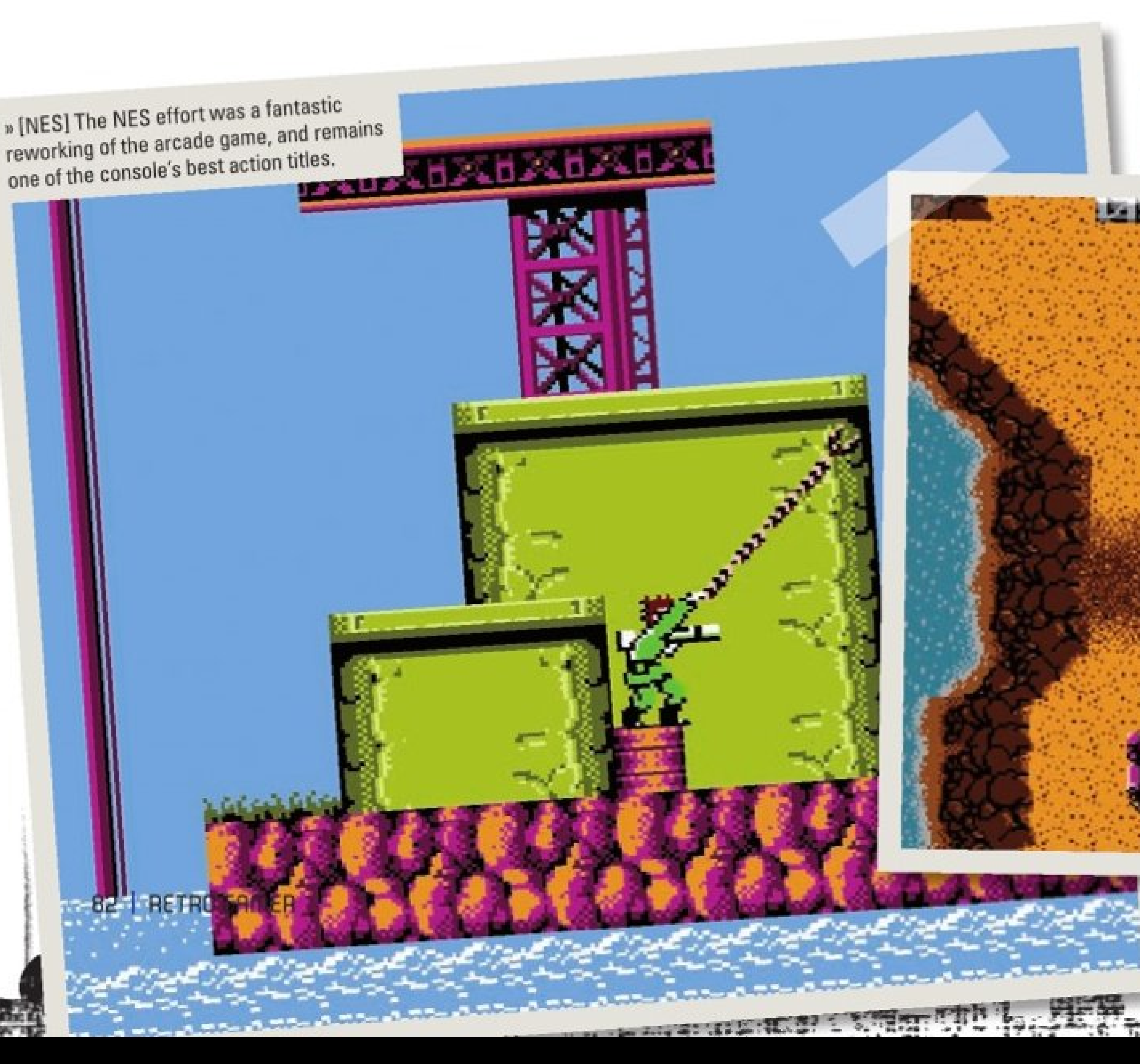


## Exhibit 1: Arcade

■ Capcom's early output gave us some of the most masochistic games in arcades. Everyone remembers tearing out chunks of hair and scalp trying to get off the first stage of *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, and games like *Commando* and *Trojan* were no cakewalks either. Released in the wake of those titles, *Bionic Commando* is widely considered to be the most arduous of all Capcom's Eighties coin-op output. This sort-of sequel to *Commando* went by the name of *Top Secret* in Japan, but featured no connection to the 1985 top-down vertical shooter whatsoever. However, in the West (where promotional material seems to title the game 'Bionic Commandos') the game saw players assume the role of an augmented side-on version of Super Joe, who was now armed with a bionic augmentation that enabled him to grapple onto platforms and throw a fist into the path of enemies to knock them down.

Notable for being a platform game in which the player can't actually jump, the difficult nature of *Bionic Commando*, not surprisingly, came from the game's restrictive control system. The awkward nature of your hero's actions meant that storming an enemy fortress, even one just five levels big, proved to be a real struggle. Add in that no jump ability meant dodging enemy bullets was rendered impossible, as well as the fact you couldn't vertically fire your weapon to shoot enemies on above platforms, and you had a recipe for a frustrating run-and-gun platformer.

However, *Bionic Commando* was nicely presented, benefiting from a resplendent soundtrack, nicely detailed graphics and some imaginative level and enemy designs.



» [NES] The NES effort was a fantastic reworking of the arcade game, and remains one of the console's best action titles.



## Exhibit 2: NES

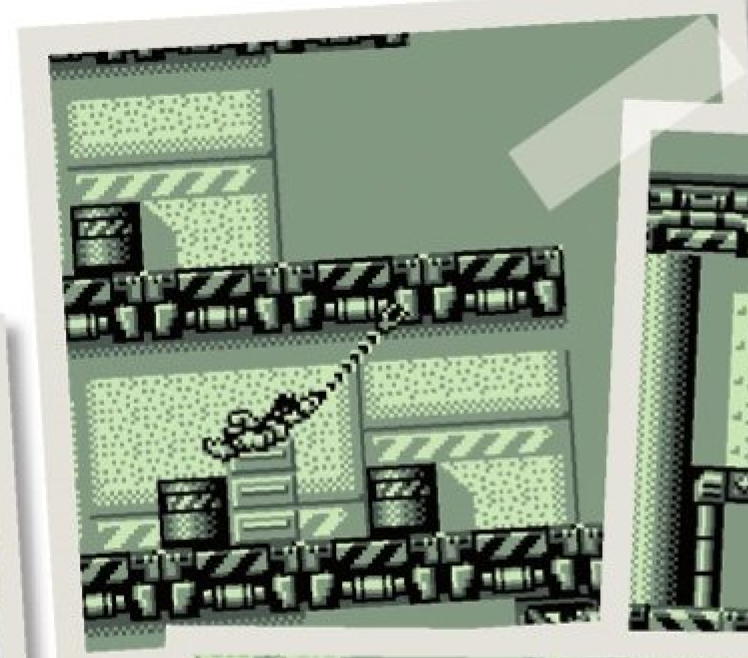
■ Capcom decided to completely rebuild *Bionic Commando* for the NES, and in doing so succeeded in creating one of the best action platform titles to ever appear on the console. The NES conversion makes a number of changes and improvements to the original arcade game. It features all-new levels, a new story about the rescue of Super Joe and, as such, a new hero too in the form of Ladd Spencer.

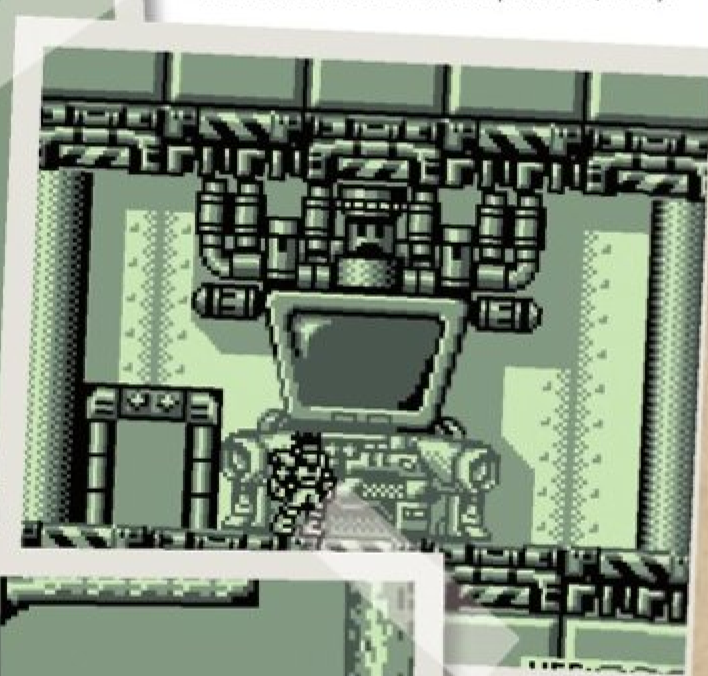
The way you would progress through the game also differed. Players were now given the choice of the order in which they tackled the game via a map screen, and levels were split into action and



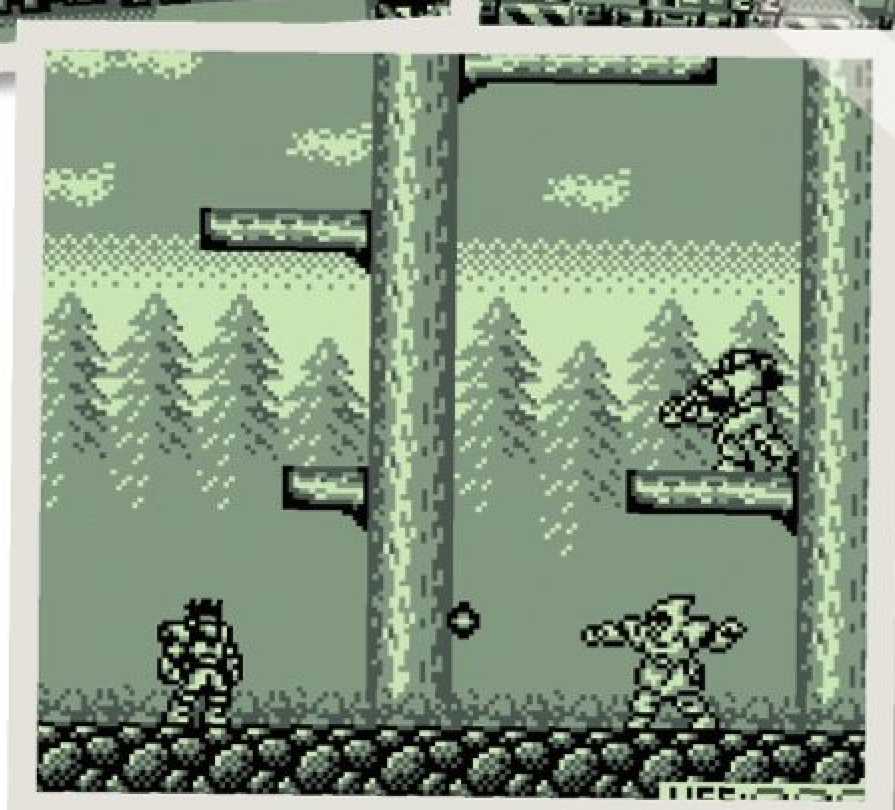
## Exhibit 3: Game Boy

■ The Game Boy version of *Bionic Commando* was essentially a monochrome remake of the NES game, sporting a few unsubtle differences. While the story remained untouched, the graphics were again redrawn with the decision to set the game in the future, meaning the stages, enemies and even Ladd (called Rad in this version for some never-explained reason) look like they're moonlighting in a *Contra* game. Further differences include slightly different level arrangements, an opening cinematic to explain the story in a pretty way, and the substitution of the top-down *Commando* sections in the NES iteration for simply more side-scrolling stages instead.









» [Game Boy] The Game Boy iteration was essentially a port of the NES version but with redrawn visuals… all a bit pointless, really.

'neutral' zones, the former acting a little like RPG towns where the player could find out important information about their mission. On top of this there was also top-down *Commando*-style shooter sections that were actuated when Super Joe's helicopter was intercepted by the always transient enemy trucks on the map screen.

Most importantly, though, the controls were also dramatically improved, with Ladd now able to collect objects, deflect some enemy bullets types using his arm, and was able to break from a swing and reattach his arm while in the air, giving him a far better sense of manoeuvrability too. Finally, his default arm attack was vertical too, which made easier work of ascending stages and jumping gaps.

And those weren't the only differences either. Released in Japan under the title *Hitler no Fakkatsu: Top Secret*, which is said to translate to 'The Resurrection Of Hitler: Top Secret', the original Japanese version of the game depicted the enemy threat as being a resurrected Nazi army, led by Adolf Hitler who played the final boss in the game. In international versions all references to Nazism were removed, but the boss still resembled the moustachioed megalomaniac.



## Honourable mention: Xbox 360

■ Though it can't really be considered retro, we felt we should mention the excellent 3D reimagining by the now-defunct Swedish developer Grin as it shares the same title as the other games featured. Once again, *Bionic Commando* was completely reworked for this 2009 HD revisit, and another new protagonist was also added to the canon – this time in the shape of dreadlocked 'bionics' soldier, Nathan Spencer. The game is set ten years after the NES game, and Super Joe makes a somewhat controversial cameo in the game that kind of undoes all his heroic work in past Capcom games (we won't spoil it for you). Despite its sandbox looks, the game is actually surprisingly linear (no bad thing, mind), with the game using MacGuffin-style plot ideas such as radiation vapours to confine the levels and the stages themselves are presented as short bite-sized action vignettes – the former actually working really well to drive the pace of the game. Despite proving to be a great addition to the series, however, the game failed to strike a chord with many gamers and reputedly sold just a measly 27,000 copies a month into its release. Sadly then, the chance of us seeing a sequel, which we'd welcome with an open bionic arm, appears very unlikely.



» [X360] Hopefully unfair meagre sales of this excellent 2009 reboot won't stop Capcom from returning to the franchise again. Who are we kidding? Of course it will.

## The Verdict:

As we like our jobs we're going to go with the resplendent NES version. Capcom's second attempt at *Bionic Commando* proved that a platformer that banished the act of jumping could actually work. It's an involving NES classic that looks, sounds and plays great, even today.



# In the chair with...

# SID MEIER

**Co-founder of MicroProse and Firaxis Games, Sid Meier is not only the man responsible for games such as Pirates! and Railroad Tycoon, but also possibly the only sane human being who can look you in the eye and tell you that he created Civilization. Cole Machin talks with him about his amazing career**

SID MEIER IS a difficult man to pigeonhole. Over the years, his name has been attached to real-time strategy, military and business simulations, adventures, and even an interactive music design program. He's founded two companies and created enduring franchises, and, in doing so, has managed to achieve a level of videogame stardom that few developers have been able to enjoy. With such a varied and influential career, it was impossible to turn down the opportunity to learn a little bit more about how he got started and just where his career may be going from here.

**RETRO GAMER: Could you tell us a little bit about how you originally came to be interested in videogaming?**

**SID MEIER:** I've always enjoyed games and as a kid I played everything from toy soldier games, to board games, to card games. It was in college when I discovered computers, and I thought to myself that it would be amazing to someday play games on them. That motivated me to learn some solid programming skills while I was still attending college, and that's where I started making small games just for fun.

**RG: Was there any specific game that really inspired you to begin development of your own? If so, what did you feel was so inspiring?**

**SM:** In the late Seventies, Bill Stealey [former MicroProse partner] and I were working together at a company in Maryland, and one day while we were attending a business conference we decided to play a flight sim arcade game during one of the breaks. Bill was really impressed that I kept winning, and I told him that I could tell what the AI was going to do each time, so it was easy for me to win. Then I said that I could make a better game in two weeks. Bill challenged me to do just that and so began our game development company. We started MicroProse Software in 1980.

**RG: Prior to the founding of MicroProse, had you already been working in the gaming industry? If so, in what capacity? How did you come into the job and what are your feelings about it?**

**SM:** My first job out of college was as a programmer at General Instrument in Hunt Valley, Maryland, which is where I met Bill Stealey. It was a dream come true to start MicroProse and to make videogames for a living. I still feel it's the best job in the world, and every day I'm thankful that I get to make games.

**RG: Can you tell us about the founding of MicroProse?**

**SM:** In the very early days of MicroProse it was just the two of us in the company. I would create the games, copy them onto floppy disks, place them in zip-lock bags, and Bill would load them into his car and drive up and down the East Coast, selling them to retailers. He'd stop at a pay phone every so often to give me an update on how sales were going, and after a particularly successful day of sales I remember Bill saying to me: 'I think we might be on to something here!'

**RG: There are always struggles in starting any new business, so are there any stories you'd like to share about the early days of MicroProse?**

**SM:** It was pretty exciting. We were at the very beginning of the games industry, so we had to figure most things out as we worked. Bill and I grew the company once we confirmed that there really was an audience for computer games, but back then it only took a programmer and a couple of artists to make a game, so we still kept the company small in the early years. It really was thrilling to be a part of the birth of an industry.

**RG: What are some of your favourite games to have come**



## SELECTED TIMELINE

**Hellcat Ace** 1982
**Spitfire Ace** 1982
**NATO Commander** 1983
**Solo Flight** 1983
**F-15 Strike Eagle** 1984
**Silent Service** 1985
**Decision In The Desert** 1985
**Crusade In Europe** 1985
**Gunship** 1986
**Conflict In Vietnam** 1986
**Sid Meier's Pirates!** 1987
**F-19 Stealth Fighter** 1988
**Sword Of The Samurai** 1989
**Red Storm Rising** 1989
**M1 Tank Platoon** 1989
**F-15 Strike Eagle II** 1989
**Covert Action** 1990
**Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon** 1990
**Sid Meier's Civilization** 1991
**Gunship 2000** 1991
**Return Of The Phantom** 1993
**Pirates! Gold** 1993
**F-15 Strike Eagle III** 1993
**CPU Bach** 1993
**Sid Meier's Colonization** 1994
**Sid Meier's CivNet** 1995
**Sid Meier's Civilization II** 1996
**Sid Meier's Gettysburg!** 1997
**Sid Meier's Antietam!** 1998
**Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri** 1999
**Sid Meier's Alien Crossfire** 1999
**Sid Meier's Civilization III** 2001
**Sid Meier's SimGolf** 2002
**Sid Meier's Civilization III: Conquests** 2003
**Sid Meier's Pirates!** 2004
**Sid Meier's Pirates! (Xbox)** 2005
**Sid Meier's Civilization IV** 2005
**Sid Meier's Railroads!** 2006
**Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution** 2008
**Sid Meier's Civilization IV: Colonization** 2008
**Sid Meier's Civilization V** 2010

**"It was a dream come true to start MicroProse and to make videogames for a living"**

*In the chair with...*

**out of MicroProse prior to the Spectrum Holobyte buyout? Why are they your favourites? Do you have any stories about the making of these particular games?**

**SM:** Choosing a favourite game that I've designed is like saying you like one of your children better than the other – I just can't choose! We made some fun games at MicroProse like the combat flight simulators, *F-15* and *F-19*; *Silent Service*; *Railroad Tycoon*; *Pirates!*; and *Civilization*.

When I told Bill I wanted to make a game about pirates, he was worried because it was such a change from the games we'd been making. He thought people wouldn't know it was one of my games, so he decided my name should go on the game box. So, *Pirates!* became the first game with 'Sid Meier' in the title.

**RG: Can you tell us more about what MicroProse was like after the buyout by Spectrum Holobyte? What caused you to decide to move on and form Firaxis?**

**SM:** MicroProse was a great company, and as it grew I knew that I wanted to continue doing two things: to work with smaller teams and to be able to code games every day. After some time had passed, I decided it was time to go off and start a smaller development studio and just focus on creating games, not the publishing end of things. So, we started Firaxis as an independent development

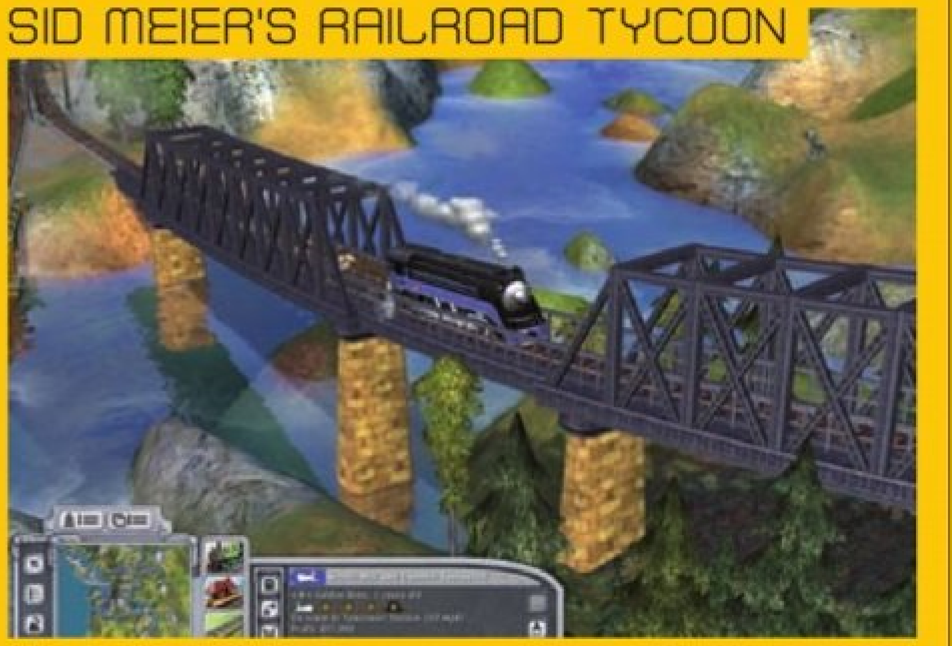
# * FIVE TO PLAY

## SID MEIER'S PIRATES!



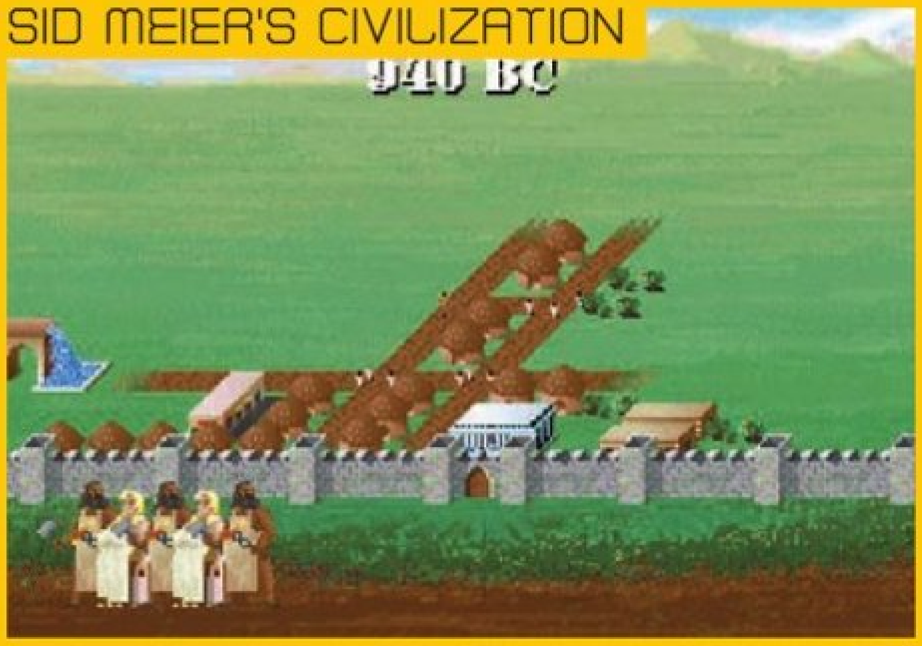

RELEASED IN ITS first iteration in 1987, *Sid Meier's Pirates!* was free-form adventure at its finest. Although the premise is deceptively simple, the huge variety of options added nearly limitless replay value. The player could choose from not only the time period in which the game is set and national affiliation of the player character, but could also make sweeping decisions on how the game was to be played. Players could be merciless, plundering and laying waste to everything, or take a largely non-violent approach, trading in commodities to make their fortune. They could remain staunchly loyal to their character's nation of origin or play the mercenary, going whichever way the shifting winds of the region happen to blow. Of the various ports and variations, the 1993 release of *Pirates! Gold* stands out as the best balance between the core gameplay and updated presentation.

## SID MEIER'S RAILROAD TYCOON



*RAILROAD TYCOON* IS a game of incredible complexity, a wolf in sheep's clothing waiting to compel the casual player to many a sleepless night. Looking at the game today it seems amazing that so much was crammed into the space and processing constraints of the day. On the higher difficulty modes, the player must not only struggle to ensure their fledgling company's success through careful consideration of the various cargoes, the best balance between volume and speed of deliveries, distances between cities, and other logistical concerns, but they also must do their best to ward off the competition in a cutthroat world of rate wars and hostile takeovers.

## SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION



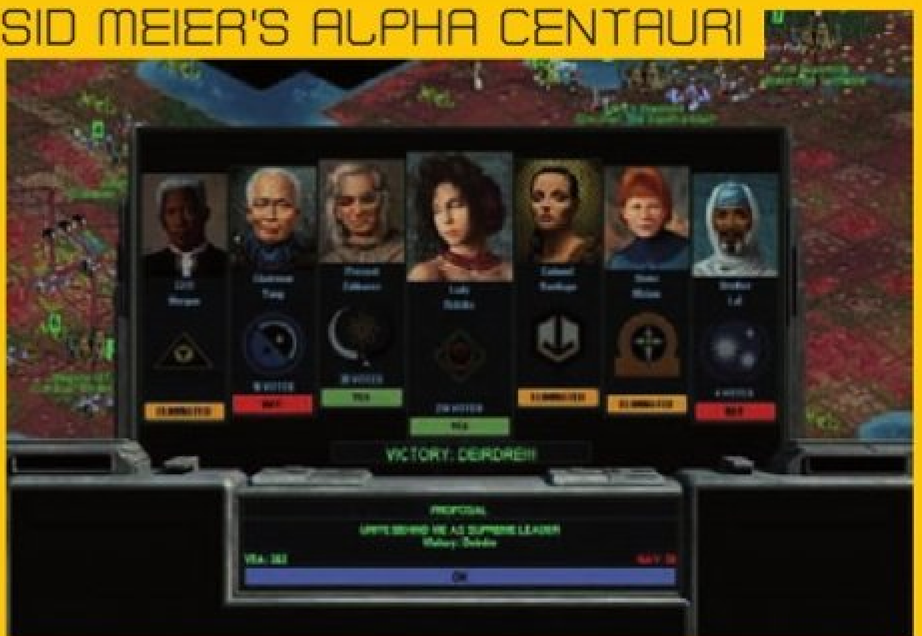
WHO HAS NEVER dreamed of having complete control over one of the greatest civilizations known to man, of controlling its every move and every development for millennia? *Civilization* was the first game to truly offer you this opportunity, to give the player a chance to forge the greatest civilization the world has ever known. Much like *Pirates!*, it gave you a multitude of ways to achieve this goal, from outright military domination to winning the space race. Although later games were, in many ways, great improvements on the original, there is always something to be said for revisiting any game that launched such an iconic gaming dynasty.

## SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!



BASED ON THE historic American Civil War battle of 1863, *Sid Meier's Gettysburg!* is an innovative foray into the world of real-time strategy. Although the game's controls may seem a little foreign to those more accustomed to the likes of *Command & Conquer*, their intuitive nature will quickly override any initial complaints. The core gameplay, however, may take a little getting used to. Unlike many real-time games of the era, troop positioning, terrain and overall morale have a huge impact on your troops, giving the game a more realistic feel. The AI is also superb, imbuing the enemy generals with enough intelligence to offer the player a true challenge.

## SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI



AT FIRST GLANCE, *Alpha Centauri* seems to be *Civilization II* set in space, which is hardly a bad thing. It is, however, also host to a number of great improvements. The most noticeable change is the addition of customisable units, more diplomatic options, and more paths to victory. The multiplayer experience was improved as well, with the implementation of a new system to allow multiple players to play the same turn simultaneously. The game also boasted an interesting storyline to complement its sci-fi feel. If these new options aren't enough to hold your interest, *Alpha Centauri* allows for easy tweaking, which has caused a number of mods and tweaks to surface.

## *NUMBER CRUNCHING

**28** years in the industry

**2nd** person inducted into the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences' Hall of Fame

**94%** review average for *Civilization II*

Credited in **5** games with names ending in an exclamation point!

Twice credited in **3** or more games in a single year (**1985** and **1993**)

**$70** million paid by Hasbro Interactive to purchase MicroProse in **1998**

**$22.3** million paid by Take-Two Interactive for the rights to *Civilization* in **2004**

**$26.7** million paid by Take-Two Interactive for Firaxis Games in 2005

About **788,000** Google results for 'Sid Meier'

**29** entries in the *Civilization* series, including main games, compilations, spin-offs and expansions

**8** million units of the *Civilization* franchise sold as of **2008**

studio, and we contracted ourselves with a few different publishers in order to take our games to market.

**RG: Was there anything you specifically wanted to do differently forming Firaxis, or anything you wanted to change from how you went about creating MicroProse? Did you find it easier going through the startup phase of the business the second time around?**

**SM:** We did have much more knowledge and experience in making games when we started Firaxis, so we were able to get the studio up and running pretty quickly. We've kept the focus on making fun games, having a company culture in which everyone is a valued contributor to our success, and living by the motto that you have to have fun to make fun.

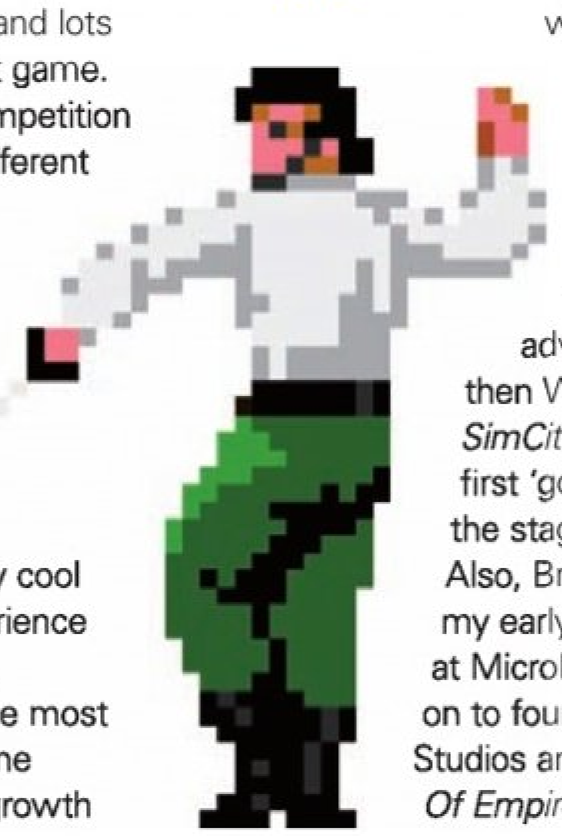


> "I wanted to do two things: to work with smaller teams and to be able to code games every day"

From a game design perspective, we established an iterative process in which we create a basic prototype that's fun to play, even without exciting graphics and fully implemented features. We have a system, we play and then improve, then again we play and improve, but this is done throughout the development process. We keep what works and get rid of what doesn't. This approach ensures that we remain focused on the gameplay experience every step of the way and deliver a fun game.

**RG: Over the years a great deal has changed in the gaming industry. Do you feel these changes have made it easier or harder for developers to be successful, and in what ways?**

**SM:** The industry has definitely changed from a business standpoint. Most games are much more expensive to make now than when I started in the early Eighties. Back then, we could make a game in our garage with three people, and now it typically takes a big office, a team of at least 30-50 people, and lots of money to make a great game. There is also far more competition along with many more different gaming platforms and a constant influx of new games for players to choose. Creatively, we're still faced with the same fun challenges we had in the past, and that's to make a really cool and engaging game experience for the targeted platform.



I think now is one of the most exciting times to be a game designer. With the rapid growth of social networking games, there are new opportunities for smaller indie developers to make and distribute games. We're seeing a wider variety of games on more cool devices than we've ever had before, and that's great for the whole industry.

**RG: Are there any, for lack of a better term, rival developers that you feel a particular affinity or respect for? If so, why, and can you give examples of games or business decisions that demonstrate those reasons and explain?**

**SM:** Some of the game designers who have inspired me over the years are Dani Bunten, creator of *The Seven Cities Of Gold*, the first open-ended adventure game; then Will Wright for *SimCity*, which was the first 'god game' and set the stage for *Civilization*. Also, Bruce Shelley, one of my early design partners at MicroProse, who went on to found Ensemble Studios and create the *Age Of Empires* series: one of

the greatest real-time strategy games ever made.

And then there are games that I wish I had thought of first, like *Guitar Hero*. Now that's a game that hits all sorts of right notes – no pun intended – in how it opens up the creativity and joy of music to a huge number of people who might not have had access to that before. It's always inspiring to see developers take a great idea and make it into a hit game.

**RG: The majority of your games have a reputation for being more intellectual, some even being referred to as 'infotainment'. Do you feel this is something important to the industry? Do you feel that this has helped contribute to your success?**

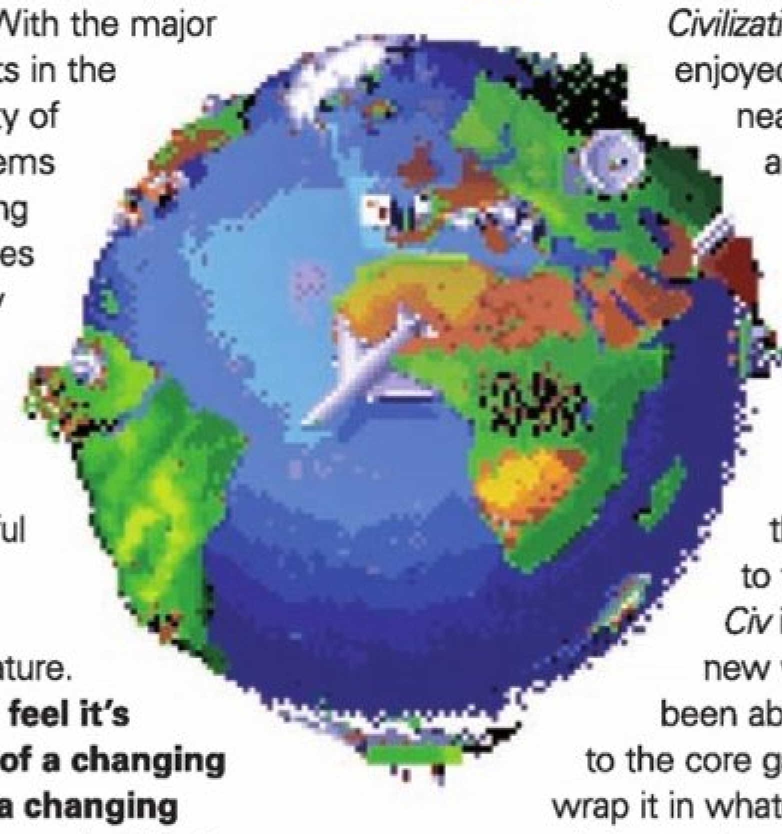
**SM:** Our focus is always on making entertainment and delivering a fun experience to players. I design games based on topics that interest me, like pirates, railroads, airplanes, history, and those topics also offer the opportunity for folks to learn something new as they play. We want to put people in the position of doing or becoming something great when they play our games. For instance, *Civilization* is based on a broadly appealing topic – all of human history – and offers players the chance to build an empire and become the greatest ruler in the world. *Civ* puts players in control and presents them with lots of interesting choices and decisions to make and, in turn, they feel really powerful and smart each time they win a game. They aren't experiencing history; they're making it and learning some great stuff along the way. This combination seems to be very appealing to people.

**RG: In recent years gaming has seen a sudden upsurge in games with antiheroes as protagonists. Games like *Grand Theft Auto* have become hugely prevalent and successful, with *GTA* itself being perhaps one of the most recognised franchises in gaming today. How do you feel about that? Do you think it has changed the industry forever, or will it be a passing phenomenon?**

**SM:** From a game design perspective, *Grand Theft Auto* has clearly taken the games industry to the next level. The open-ended gameplay and movie-quality graphics set a new standard for triple-A titles, and that inspires other designers, which is great for all of us who love to play games. The games industry is constantly changing and growing due to the wide variety of games being played by consumers on a huge array of devices

**RG: Do you feel that the violence in these types of games is an extension or mirror of earlier violent games such as first-person shooters or military simulations, or do you feel that the freedom of unprovoked violence makes them something completely different?**

**SM:** Violence in any game is just one of the many elements presented to players in the gameplay experience. With the major improvements in the graphic quality of games, it seems that everything the player does now is vividly depicted on the screen, which makes it a more powerful experience. It's still just a gameplay feature.



**RG: Do you feel it's a reflection of a changing industry or a changing society? Do you feel that these types of games do have social repercussions?**

> I make games based on topics that interest me, and fortunately I haven't run out of interesting topics yet

**SM:** The industry is driving changes across all elements of game design and technology in order to meet the ever-increasing demands of customer expectations. So, both parties are driving change. There are a lot of commentaries taking place about the social repercussions of games; we'll have to keep an eye on that research to understand what the impact may be.

**RG: Do you feel that the gaming industry should bear a level of social responsibility? Do you feel that videogames should be treated as an art form and be free of censorship?**

**SM:** We feel that games should be appropriate for their intended audience and that developers and publishers bear the responsibility of making sure that happens. Here in the US the ESRB has established a clear rating system to help ensure that game makers and consumers are aware of the type of content they can expect in each game.

**RG: Moving on, are there any particular games or franchises that you are particularly proud to have begun or been a part of? If so, what makes these specific titles important to you? Do you feel they have had any far-reaching effects on the industry in general?**

**SM:** I'm particularly proud of *Civilization*. It's been enjoyed by players for nearly 20 years now and is still going strong. We're just about to release *Civilization V* and the buzz around it is amazing. I think the secret to the success of *Civ* is that with each new version we've been able to stay true to the core gameplay and wrap it in whatever audio/visual presentation makes sense for the intended platform. History is a topic that appeals to all kinds of people, all over the world. It's pretty compelling to be given the chance to become a major player in the making of history and create your own story. That, along with the 'just one more turn' factor, seems to be what people like best about the game. We've created *Civ* games for the PC, consoles, handhelds, iPhone, iPad, and now we're bringing *Civ* to social network gaming.

I'm currently designing a *Civ* experience for Facebook called *Civilization Network*. Anyone interested can join our Facebook fan page at **www.facebook.com/civnetwork** – sorry for the shameless plug! 20 years ago I wouldn't have predicted that our little turn-based strategy game would take over the world!

## RG: Similarly, are there any games, your own or anyone else's, that you feel didn't get the attention they deserved? If so, what do you feel made them so special?

**SM:** Well, years ago I made a game called *CPU Bach* that was a music-generating program for the 3DO platform. Players could create Baroque music in the style of Bach for various instruments and in a variety of forms – concerti, fugues, minuets, chorales. The compositions were then performed by the software with graphics on screen showing the virtual instruments being played. It didn't get a lot of love back then, but with the popularity of music-based games now, it might just be a hit!

**RG: Is there anything that you hope either the industry or gamers have taken from your career thus far? Any lessons learned or impressions given?**

**SM:** The key to any great game is making sure it's fun. My approach has always been to find the fun first, then surround it with lots of interesting choices and decisions for the player to make, and make sure the player is the central figure in the game experience.

**RG: Finally, where would you like to go from here? What games are itching to be created? Where would you like to see yourself in another five or ten years?**

**SM:** Right now I'm enjoying the process of making a social networking game. It's a new frontier in gaming and we're excited to be in and on the ground floor. I make games based on topics that interest me, and fortunately I haven't run out of interesting topics yet. I'm hoping to make games forever because there are so many great devices on which to play them and still so many great topics left to cover.



» [PC] *Magic: The Gathering* formed a great mix of exploring a dungeon-crawling world and collectable card gaming.



» [PC] Though it may feel much more Maxis than Meier, *Sid Meier's Sim Golf* is still a fun way to whittle away the hours.



» [PC] What's that third option? Sleep through case? The realism in *Covert Action* is above reproach.

# YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Despite the rush surrounding Civilization V, Sid Meier took a few moments to answer your questions

**I'm a huge fan. I really liked *Civilization*, but *Colonization* is where it was at. Why did it take so long to make a follow-up, or remake, to *Colonization*?**
We had received a lot of requests from fans over the past few years to bring back *Colonization*. It wasn't until after the completion of *Civilization IV* that it seemed like the perfect opportunity to build a new *Colonization* using that engine, so that's when we decided to make the game.

**Would you like to do another Civil War game, maybe in the style of the *Total War* series?**
The Civil War is a great topic for a game. I really enjoyed making *Gettysburg!*, so you never know. Maybe there's another one in my future.

***Sim Golf* was ace, but the sport itself is a tad dull. How about using a similar formula to make *Sim Soccer*?**
I make games based on topics that interest me like history, pirates, railroads, golf, etc. Soccer just doesn't fall into that category for me, but I agree it's a cool idea for a game.

**I always liked playing the Dutch in *Colonization*. Did you have a preferred colonial power when playing the game? If so, which?**
I like playing all of them. The game experience is different every time I play, but if I had to choose a favourite it would probably be the Dutch as well.

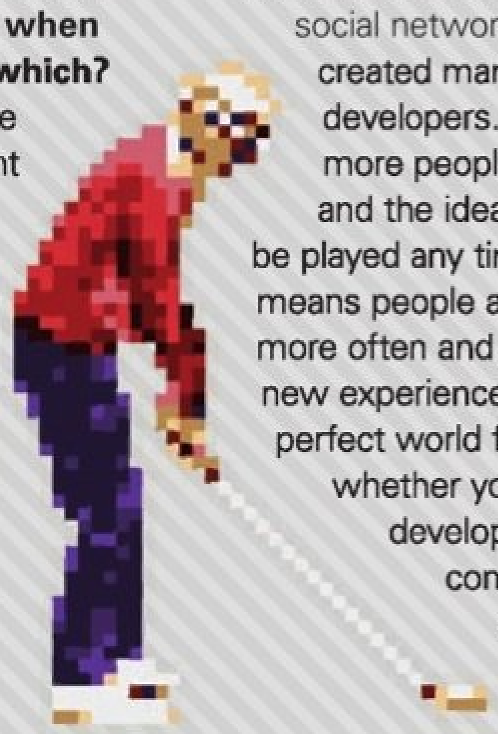
**Do you like being one of the few game designers to get their name above the title?**
That was a marketing strategy that the team came up with in the early days of MicroProse and it has stayed in place over all of these years. It's certainly nice – and humbling – to see my name on the box of so many games that people enjoy playing.

**Are there any projects you cancelled or stopped working on that never saw the light of day?**
Sure, that's a regular part of being a game designer. There was a game about dinosaurs that I worked on over ten years ago that never made the cut. We just couldn't find the fun in the game, so after trying lots of different approaches we decided to put a stop to development. I still think the topic is a great idea for a game, so maybe someday we'll revisit it.

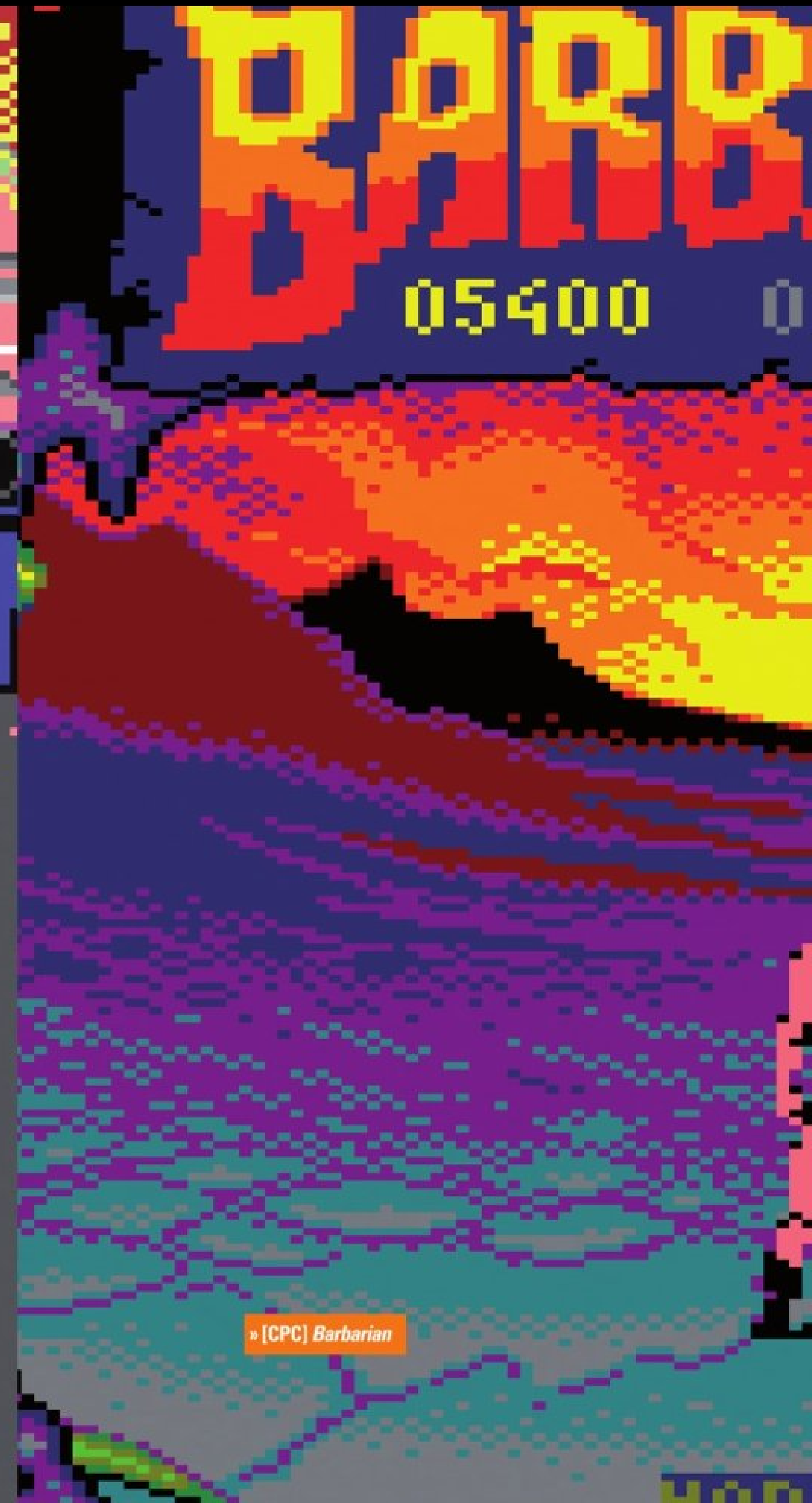


**You've created classics in a range of genres. Are there any other genres you'd like to take a stab at?**
Well, I'm developing *Civilization Network* right now, which is a social networking game based on the *Civilization* experience, and it's a new genre for me, too!

**How do you see the 'big studio' model changing with the number of companies looking at the mobile and networking markets?**
The recent popularity of iPhones and social networking games has created many opportunities for developers. There are more and more people playing games, and the idea that games can be played any time and any place means people are playing games more often and always looking for new experiences. That creates a perfect world for game makers, whether you're a big publisher/developer or a small indie company, so I think we'll see all kinds of developers making games.



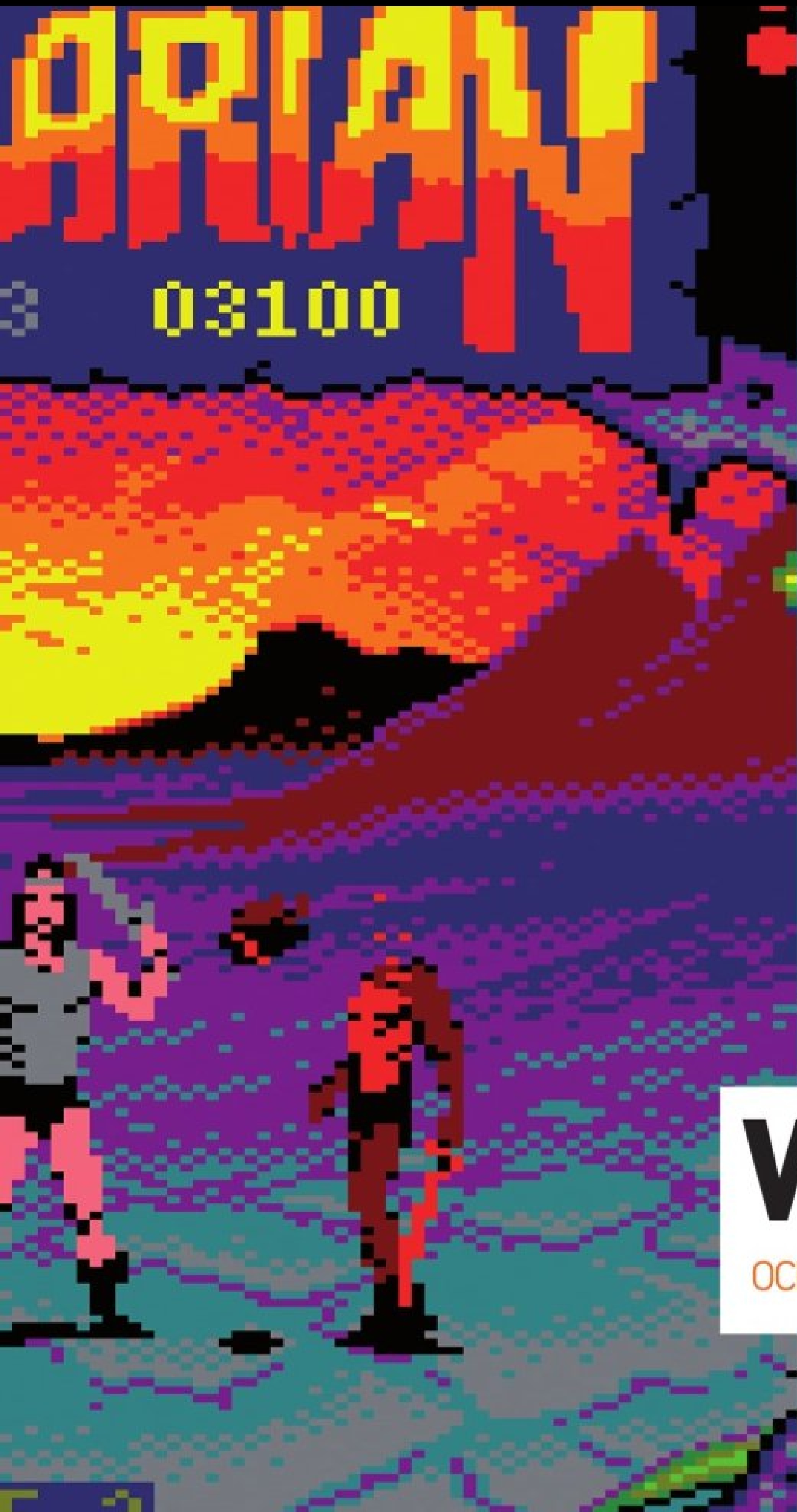

» [C64] *IK+*



» [CPC] *Barbarian*



» [CPC] *Rampage*





» [CPC] *Renegade*

# We Are The Champions

## OCEAN'S COMPILATION HAS NO TIME FOR LOSERS



» RETROREVIVAL




» SPECTRUM/C64/CPC
» OCEAN SOFTWARE
» 1988

**You have to hand it to Ocean; it certainly knew how to create cracking compilations. While many companies were content on simply filling up tape space with as many games as possible – regardless of quality – Ocean always tried to go that one step further. And often succeeded.**

One such effort was the magnificent *We Are The Champions*, which included five games from a variety of different software houses. Unlike some of the compilations we've looked at in recent issues, all five titles remain the same on both the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC releases, with only individual quality marking them above each other.

The whole compendium has something of a competitive streak running through it, as the majority of titles are fighting and two-player games. *Renegade* is a solid conversion of the arcade game, the sublime *IK+* and *Barbarian* continue the fighting mood, while *Super Sprint* and *Rampage* ensure that there were plenty of games to play with your mates. All in all it's an amazingly solid compilation of games that fares well on the Amstrad and C64 thanks to the quality of their versions. The Spectrum offering is no slouch, though, with *Renegade* and *Rampage* being particularly good fun to play. In fact, only *Super Sprint* is the true duffer, being a rather disappointing port on all three systems.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of *We Are The Champions* is that none of the games were created by Ocean. *Barbarian* is courtesy of Palace Software, *IK+* is under the System 3 label, while *Rampage* and *Super Sprint* are from Activision and Electric Dreams respectively. Only *Renegade* is connected to Ocean, due to it buying out developers Imagine.

Despite the fact that Ocean has little to do with the creation of the original games, it certainly knew how to put together a desirable collection and it should come as no surprise to learn that *We Are The Champions* did rather well upon its release. Now excuse us, we're off to boot it up one more time. *

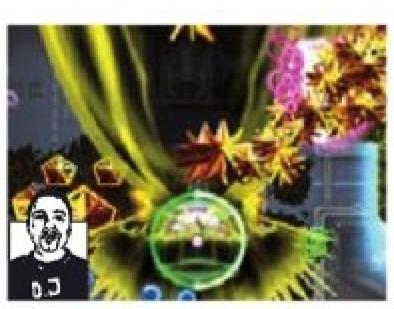


» [C64] *Super Sprint*



>> It's a good month for the Wii this issue with both Metroid: Other M and Gunblade NY getting plenty of play time. We've also been treated to the XBLA port of Sonic Adventure and an excellent new shooter from shmup expert Cave. Good times

## PICKS OF THE MONTH



**DARRAN**
**DoDonPachi Resurrection**
Oh come on. As if I'd have been playing anything else when a Cave shooter was out



**STUART**
**Gunblade NY**
A good old-fashioned lightgun blaster that looks simple, but is loads of fun to play.



**DAVID**
**Metroid: Other M**
A fresh update that plays like a cross between *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Prime*. Yum.

>> METROID: OTHER M

THE M STANDS FOR MMMMMMMMMMM…

# Metroid: Other M

Wii

## INFORMATION

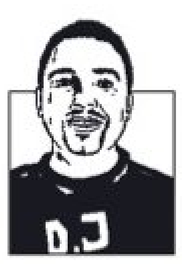
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £37.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** TEAM NINJA
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

## BRIEF HISTORY

» Samus's first adventure was on the NES in 1986, and she has gone on to star in numerous sequels on a variety of systems. In addition to being the main character in the *Metroid* series, heroine Samus is also a playable character in the *Super Smash Bros* games.



» [Wii] This tussle is one of the best in the game. Use your grappling hook to pull this beast out of its lava and deliver a stern beating.



**One listen to Samus's utterly dull monologue at the beginning of Team Ninja's latest release and you quickly realise that *Other M* isn't going to be your typical *Metroid* game.**

Just as Retro Studios did with its successful *Prime* trilogy, Team Ninja, with the help of long-time *Metroid* collaborator Yoshio Sakamoto, has taken the core *Metroid* DNA but rebuilt it, keeping everything you'd expect to see in a traditional Samus adventure but adding enough of its own flamboyant identity to ensure that it feels refreshingly unique. The end result is a game that, while not without its issues, manages to deliver everything you'd expect from a *Metroid* game.

Set between the events of *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Fusion*, it's obvious that the former has a heavy bearing on *Other M*. From its ominous, claustrophobic corridors to its frightening wildlife, *Other M*'s similarities to Samus's 16-bit adventure are uncanny. She even moves like she did in *Super Metroid*, effortlessly powering around the levels, instead of sticking with the tried-and-tested plod that worked so well for her first-person adventures.

We don't want to say too much about *Other M*'s plot, as there are plenty of twists and turns along the way, but we will say that Samus's new inner monologue left us rather cold. While we could do without the space marines – no doubt added because, hey, space marines are cool – we just don't like this new narrative structure, mainly because it turns the hardened bounty hunter into a whinging 20-something that never has anything to say whenever she opens her pretty mouth.

Fortunately, Samus is a woman of action, not words, and once the toe-curling dialogue is out the way you get to experience a whole new side to the famous bounty hunter. Despite her bulky-looking suit, Team Ninja's Samus is extremely agile and can pull off all sorts of impressive tricks as she battles her way through the huge ship. While she only has access to a small number of buttons – you play *Other M* with just the Remote – she's still able to pull off some athletically impressive stunts. Just what you'd expect from the team that made *Ninja Gaiden*'s reboot so exhilaratingly fun to play. Boss encounters fare even better thanks to some impressive attack patterns and genuinely mesmerising villains. While you'll occasionally have to resort to the same methods to kill them, more than enough have their own unique identities, normally requiring you to use

## WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**SUPER METROID [SNES]**



▽ SOMETHING NEW
**NINJA GAIDEN II [XBOX 360]**



» [Wii] The level design is extremely atmospheric, matching the eerie loneliness that *Super Metroid* delivered.





» [Wii] One of the great things about *Metroid: Other M* is that all the enemies look like a natural evolution of the ones in earlier titles.



## OPINION

I could do without all the emotional baggage that Samus now comes with and the combat is pretty simplistic, but there's no denying that this is a decent addition to the *Metroid* canon. It looks absolutely beautiful as well.

**Stuart Hunt**

one of Samus's recently acquired moves to finish them off.

Although Team Ninja has injected a huge amount of zest and energy into *Metroid*'s combat, *Other M* still works best when it's just Samus on her lonesome. As with previous games in the series, there is a huge number of hidden missile tanks and other items to discover, and the clever structure essentially mimics her old 2D adventures, meaning that while it features stunning environments, it feels deliciously old-school in its look and structure.

The new control system also works surprisingly well, with the player holding the Remote like a NES pad for the exploration and fighting sections and quickly switching it to point at the screen whenever Samus needs to go into first-person mode to search for clues. It's rather cumbersome – particularly if you're a leftie – to begin with, but perseverance reaps its own rewards. Nevertheless, there remain situations where the controls work against you, and some of the later boss battles can be needlessly tricky due to the constant disorientation when switching between the two modes.

*Metroid: Other M* may not be the leap forward we were hoping for, but it's a nevertheless sterling addition to the series and one all fans should enjoy.

### In a Nutshell

**It's certainly not without its issues, but *Metroid: Other M* remains an impressive achievement that's only let down by its superfluous cut-scenes and occasionally frustrating controls.**

### >> Scores

| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation | 78% |
| Graphics | 96% |
| Sound | 86% |
| Playability | 87% |
| Addictivity | 82% |
| **Overall** | **84%** |



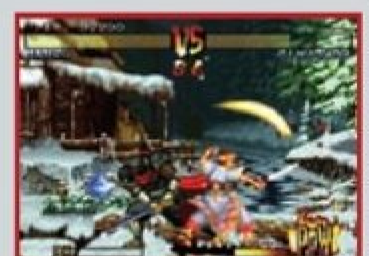


# ✱ VIRTUAL ROUND-UP

>> There's no better medium to find all your favourite retro games than the various download services. Here are this month's new additions

## ▾ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

It's yet another slow month for the Virtual Console, with just two titles being released for the service. Admittedly they're two very good Neo Geo brawlers in the form of *Samurai Shodown III* and *Fatal Fury 3*, but we crave variety and, at the moment, Nintendo's service isn't delivering.

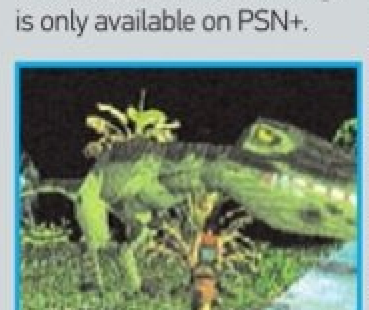


**Samurai Shodown III**
» **System:** Neo Geo
» **Points:** 900 (£6)
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆
» *Samurai Shodown III* often gets criticised as not being a worthy sequel to its two predecessors. This is actually wrong, for while it's not quite up to the impossibly high standards of *II*, it remains an interesting fighter with a great range of characters and solid play mechanics.

**Fatal Fury 3: Road To The Final Victory**
» **System:** Neo Geo
» **Points:** 900 (£6)
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆

## ▾ PLAYSTATION NETWORK

Another miserable line-up, with just two games: *Front Mission 3* and the greatly overpriced *Tomb Raider*, which, at the time of writing, is only available on PSN+.



**Tomb Raider**
» **System:** PlayStation
» **Points:** £7.99
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆
» Lara's original adventure is looking a little tired now, but it's still a great game to play through, and one that could teach some of its sequels a lesson or two. Our only issue is its high price compared to other PSone games on PSN.

**Front Mission 3**
» **System:** PlayStation
» **Points:** £3.99

## ▾ GAME ROOM

Another month of Game Room games – another month of crushing disappointment. We were incredibly excited about Microsoft's new venture, and rightly so, but as month after month of downloadable tat gets constantly released it's becoming harder and harder to keep faith in the project. Microsoft still has the potential to turn this around, but does it want to? Expect a follow-up feature very soon.

✱ All games are 240 Points

**Bridge**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Hard Hat**
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Reversi**
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**A Game Of Concentration**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

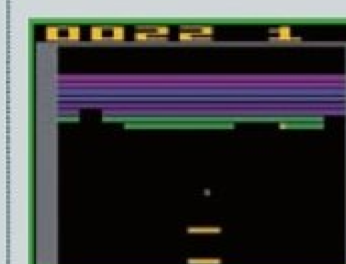
**Boxing**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆



**Video Chess**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆
» Remember the good old days when you'd go down to your local smoke-filled arcade and have a good old game of chess? Of course you don't, because only an idiot would want to play around with a chequered board when there were amazing videogames like *Robotron: 2084*, *Chase HQ*, *Bubble Bobble* and *Space Harrier* to play around with instead. Do you hear that, Chrome? Amazing games like those ones. Not bloody chess.

**Super Basketball**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Checkers**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆



**Super Breakout**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆
» More Game Room pointlessness as we're once again treated to an inferior port of an arcade game that's already available on the service. Save your money or go for the better version, because buying into this just gives Microsoft and Chrome incentive to release even more of these poor and utterly pointless ports.

**Pinball**
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆



**City Bomber**
» **System:** Arcade
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆
» Decent little blaster that plays like Konami's *Road Fighter*, but has numerous shoot-'em-up elements as well. Insanely fast and with plenty of neat little touches – including the ability to jump over other cars – it's only really let down by a ridiculously steep difficulty curve. An enjoyable release that deserves a quick download.

**Tennis**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Maze Craze**
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

**Snafu**
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

### INFORMATION

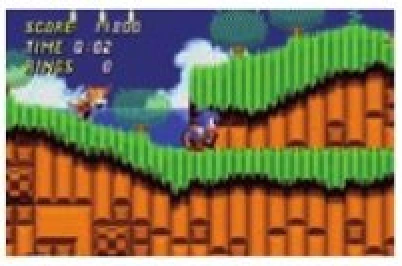
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PSN
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** 800 POINTS (£6.80)
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

### BRIEF HISTORY

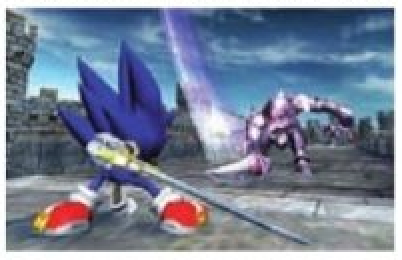
» Starting off life as an air freshener, Sonic quickly graduated with platforming honours at Harvard and went on to star in the ridiculously successful *Sonic The Hedgehog*. After receiving numerous accolades for his 2D adventures, he moved into the world of 3D gaming with, so far, decidedly mixed results.

### WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2**
(MEGA DRIVE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
**SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT** (WII)



### GO DEEPER

The facts behind Sonic Adventure

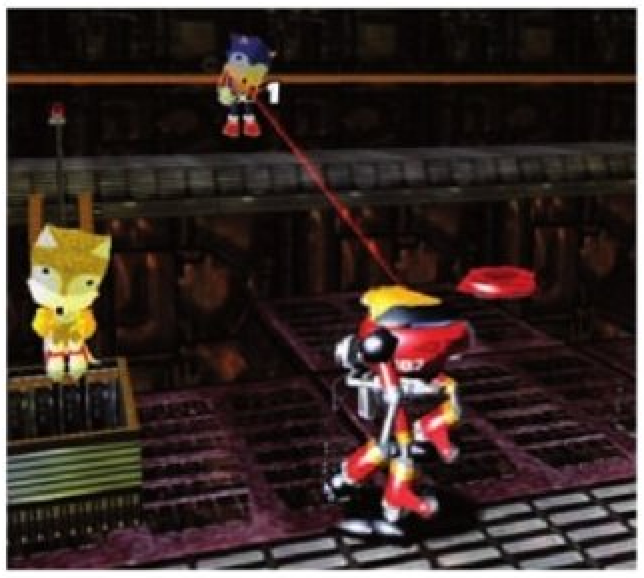
**>> *Sonic Adventure* is notable for introducing Big the cat and E-102 Gamma to the franchise. Shadow made his debut in *Sonic Adventure 2*.**

**>> You can buy the DX update for an additional 400 Points (£3.40). While it adds numerous new missions, the included Game Gear games are absent.**




» [XBLA] Stages like this are great fun to play. It's just a shame they're not all like this.





## WITNESS THE BEGINNING OF SONIC'S FALL FROM GRACE ALL OVER AGAIN

# Sonic Adventure




**Well this is something of a bittersweet experience. After excitedly awaiting the release of Sega's first Dreamcast game on Xbox Live Arcade, we've been forced to admit that it just isn't that good.**

Aside from the fact that this isn't technically a Dreamcast game – it's actually a hybrid of the GameCube and PC ports – *Sonic Adventure* just hasn't aged very well, offering little more than a loving nostalgia rush to those who were lucky enough to play it the first time around.

Riddled with the same bugs that plagued the original game 12 years ago – we fell through the bridge on the first level twice! – and featuring a camera that feels like it's being controlled by a hyperactive four-year-old, it's a disappointing experience and highlights everything that's currently wrong with the vast majority of Sonic's 3D non-Wii releases.

What makes this so frustrating is that there are still moments of *Sonic Adventure* that are genuinely brilliant. The music, for example, is exceptionally good. Lively and energetic, it's full of fun and immediately transports you back to a time where you truly believed that Sega could beat Sony's incoming PS2. Visually it's not as strong, with the new high-def sheen giving everything a rather weird look. There's a huge amount of pop-up, and the draw distance also suffers. In fact, we ran the original game through VGA and, believe it or not, it actually looks better on the Dreamcast! We've no problem with Sega utilising the original 4:3 aspect ratio and it's also pleasing to see the game locked at a blisteringly fast 60 frames per second, but we just don't understand why Sega wasn't prepared to invest a little more time into making this as polished as possible.

Yes, there are Achievements now, but it's not enough.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about *Sonic Adventure*, though, is that if you look past the annoying talking heroes and ignore its terrible hub stages, twitchy camera and annoying glitches, there's a genuinely decent game underneath. The level design of the action stages is still utterly superb, and they remain fantastic fun to race through. It's just a shame that everything else lets it down.

We understand why Sega would want to use its mascot to champion its new digital Dreamcast releases, but this isn't the way to entice new gamers – or even fans of the original, for that matter.




» [XBLA] There are a variety of characters to unlock and play with, but do you really want to spend the time to do it?

### OPINION




I was a huge fan of *Sonic Adventure*, but there's no denying that it just doesn't have what it takes any more. The racing levels are good fun, but the numerous bugs, awful camera and dull adventure levels let the whole package down. A big fat disappointment.

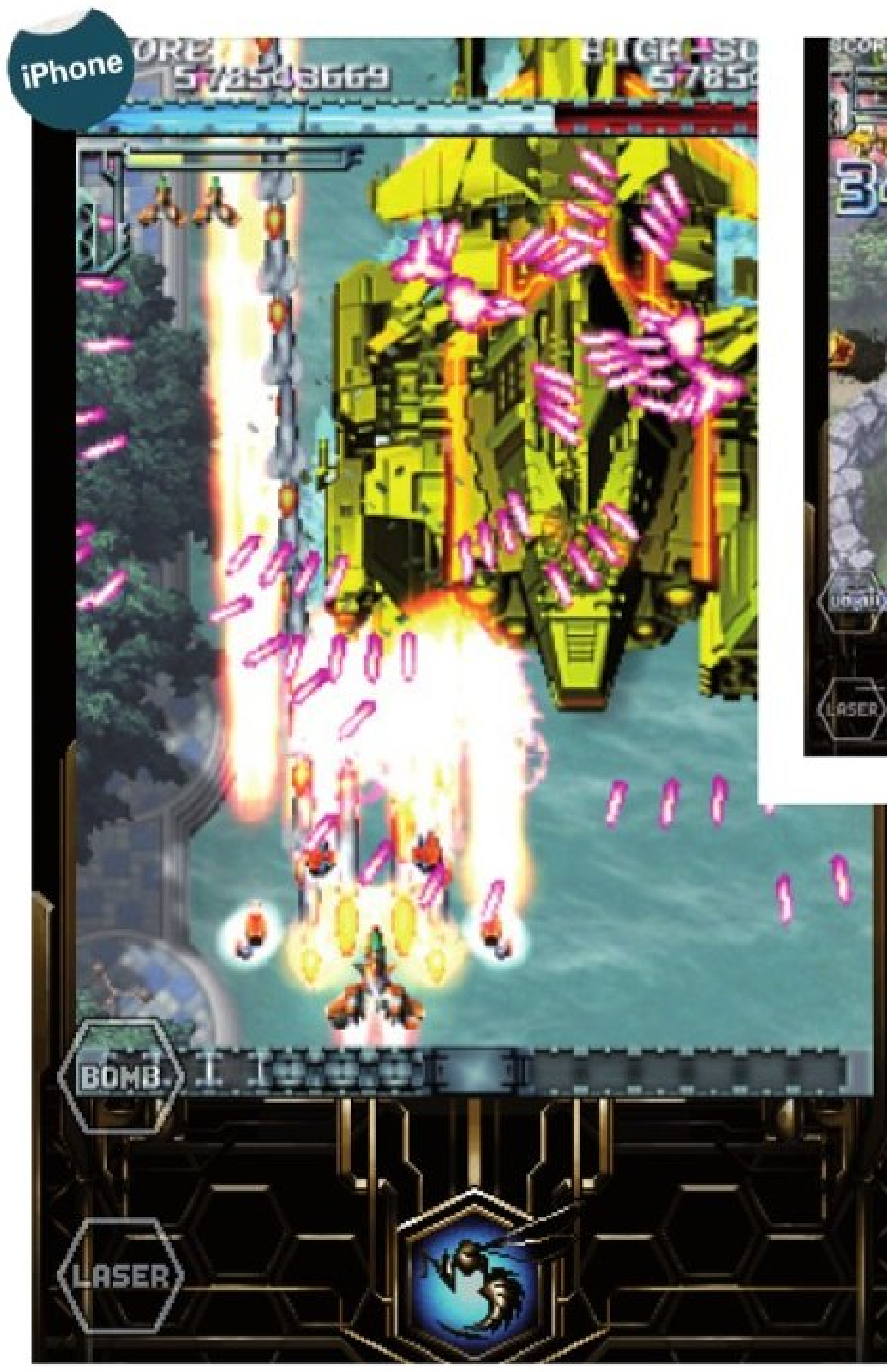
**Stuart Hunt**

### In a nutshell

**The last 12 years have not been kind to *Sonic Adventure*, meaning this new digital release is something of a disappointment. Here's hoping that better Dreamcast games are chosen in the future.**

### >> Scores

| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation | **56%** |
| Graphics | **72%** |
| Sound | **93%** |
| Playability | **62%** |
| Addictivity | **68%** |
| **Overall** | **63%** |



» [iPhone] Weaving between bullets is simple thanks to the precise controls.



# DoDonPachi Resurrection

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** IPHONE\IPOD TOUCH » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £5.49 » **PUBLISHER:** CAVE » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



**After being wowed by its port of *Espgaluda II*, we've been awaiting the release of Cave's next iPhone game. *DoDonPachi* isn't quite up to the same standard as its predecessor, but it shows just how far Cave is ahead of the competition.**

As with *Espgaluda II*, the controls are an absolute joy to use. Any part of the screen you touch acts as the centre of your fighter, allowing you to zip around with ease. It's a wonderful system that still impresses us whenever we use it.

Sadly, while it retains the same elegant controls as *Espgaluda II*, its core gameplay mechanics aren't up to the same standards. Destroying enemies builds your multiplier and fills your Hyper Counter, which allows you to score even more points. There are also two distinct methods of firing: the laser slows you down but enables you to repel weaker lasers, while the shot attack speeds you up and counters bullets. It's solid, but it lacks the polish of *Espgaluda II*.

It's also a lot easier, with the precise controls and the sheer number of bullets on screen making quick work of the opposition. It's not a huge issue as it simply allows you to concentrate on your high score, but it's a pity that it doesn't pack more of a challenge.

## OPINION



While I agree that *DoDonPachi Revolution* isn't quite as enjoyable a blast as *Espgaluda II*, it's still a must-own title, and serves as further proof that Apple's handheld is possibly the finest portable ever produced for shoot-'em-ups. Sterling work, Cave.

**Stuart Hunt**

## >> Scores

| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation | 85% |
| Graphics | 90% |
| Sound | 88% |
| Playability | 94% |
| Addictivity | 84% |

**Overall 86%**



## Worms 2: Armageddon

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £11.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

**>> It's taken its** sweet time to arrive, but now PSN users can experience one of Team17's best multiplayer games. While the single-player mode is surprisingly polished, *Worms* has always been about its multiplayer content, and this version is no different. There's a ridiculous number of weapons on offer, a variety of different gameplay modes, and the same finely tuned turn-based combat that's now been entertaining gamers for over 15 years. Highly recommended.

>> Score **91%**



## Shank

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £9.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

**>> After being impressed** with last month's *Scott Pilgrim* game, we've now discovered another fun scrolling fighter. While *Shank* is little more than the old-fashioned side-scrolling gaming equivalent of *Kill Bill*, it's all tied together by its excellent animation, amusing story and spectacularly bloody action. It also boasts a great two-player mode that, unlike *Scott Pilgrim vs The World*, can be played online as well as with someone in the same room. Level length remains an issue, but it's still a resoundingly fun experience while it lasts.

>> Score **78%**

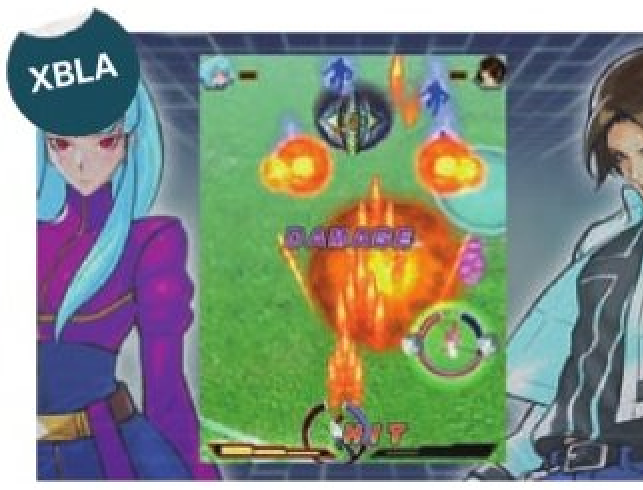


## Space Invaders: Infinity Gene

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS (£6.80) » **PLAYERS:** 1

**>> We adored *Infinity Gene*** on the iPhone thanks to its clever play mechanics, thumping soundtrack and impossibly stylish visuals. The home version is just as good, and now features the added bonus of slowly evolving into 3D. Apart from that one change, it is pretty much business as usual, which is fine with us as the constantly evolving gameplay, and entertaining mechanics still make *Infinity Gene* a highly entertaining blaster.

>> Score **90%**



## The King Of Fighters: Sky Stage

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS (£6.80) » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

**>> With so many** stunning shmups released recently, *The King Of Fighters: Sky Stage* ends up feeling decidedly average. It's a shame, because there are certainly some interesting ideas in here, including alternative bosses, occasionally clever bullet patterns, and the ability to play as Mai. Unfortunately, it's married to dull attack waves, mediocre visuals and some truly dreary music. A nice idea, but it's been poorly executed.

>> Score **51%**

# RETRORATED

## >> GUNBLADE NY AND LA MACHINEGUNS ARCADE HITS PACK

### SHORT ON SUBSTANCE BUT BIG ON FUN

# Gunblade NY

## And LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack

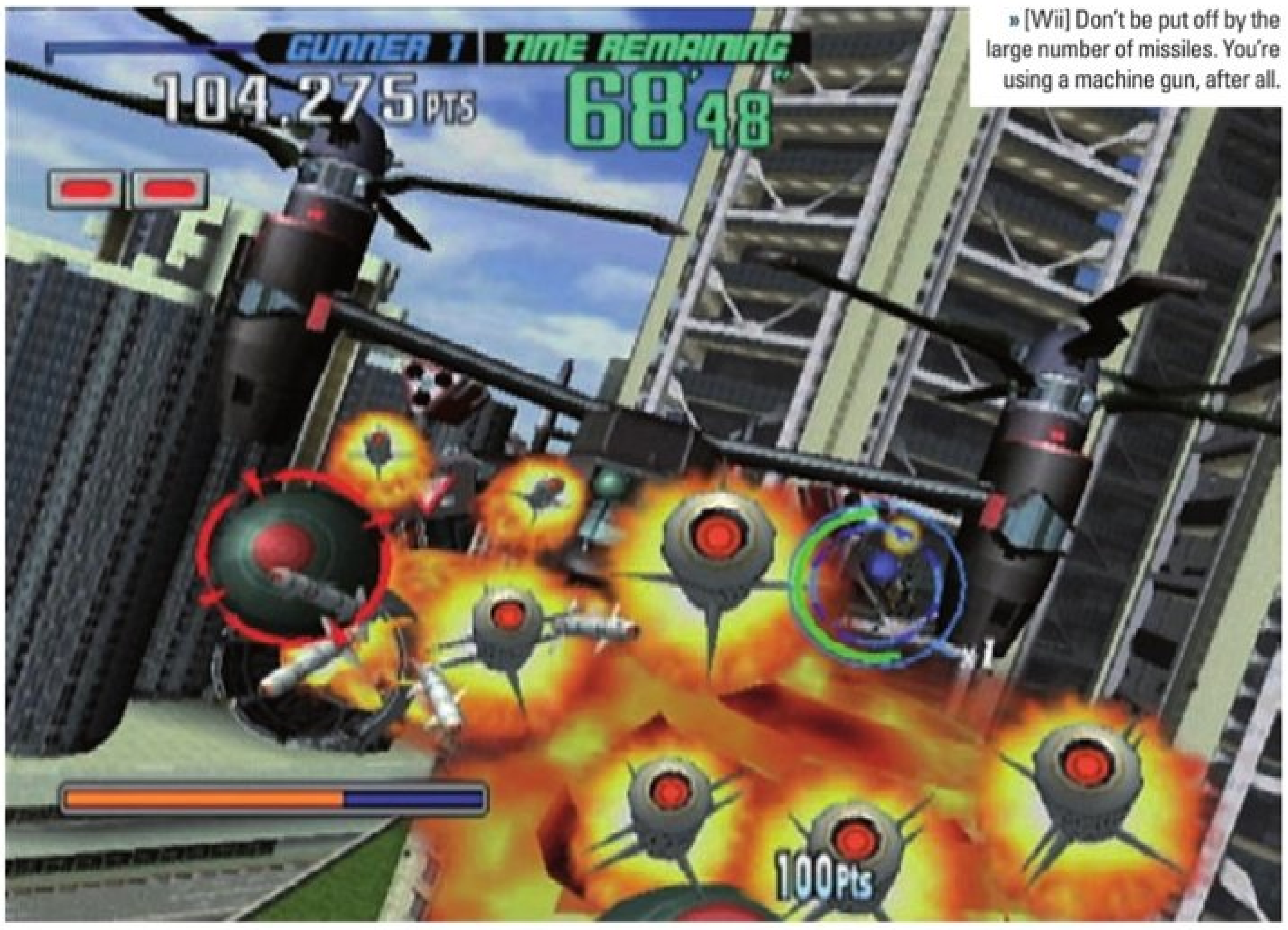



**This new double pack from Sega was never going to live up to its arcade predecessors. After all, both *Gunblade NY* and *LA Machineguns* gave you the opportunity to spray famous locations with a heavy-duty machine gun, which the Wii's weedy controller is sadly unable to replicate.**

And yet, while it's unable to recreate the feeling of exhilaration that came from gripping a constantly recoiling weapon, it remains a surprisingly solid compilation that is short on substance but is still able to deliver plenty of thrills and spills.

Indeed, one of the great accomplishments of both titles is that they're just so much damned fun to play. Yes, they're highly limited compared to other lightgun games – there's no secondary fire buttons to utilise, or options to duck behind cover – but when you're hurtling through the air and raining down hot molten death on anything that strays into your sights, it doesn't really matter. Both games are exceptionally enjoyable to play, delivering the kind of short, highly controlled bursts of tense gaming that Sega used to produce in its sleep.

Graphically, the pack is something of a mixed bag. *Gunblade NY* utilised the Sega Model 2B board, while *LA Machineguns* was Model 3.1. As a result, the polygons – especially in *Gunblade* – are rather lacking in definition. Fortunately, both titles are exceptionally fast, and the constantly swooping camera and frenzied action soon distracts from the games' chunky visuals.




» [Wii] Don't be put off by the large number of missiles. You're using a machine gun, after all.

### INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £19.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

### BRIEF HISTORY

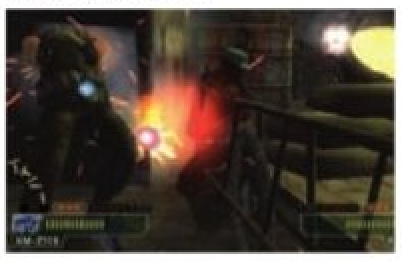
» *Gunblade NY* first appeared in arcades back in 1995. Housed in a huge cabinet with two chunky mounted machine guns, it certainly made an impression on arcade-goers thanks to its sheer accessibility. Its sequel was released three years later and featured a similar gun layout.

### WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2** (DC)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
**GHOST SQUAD** (WII)



### GO DEEPER

The facts behind Gunblade Double Pack

**>> To ensure that *Gunblade NY* was as accurate as possible, the design team spent plenty of time in the Big Apple**

**>> If you want the original arcade versions you'll need over £1,300 and a hell of a lot of space**




» [Wii] The Model 2-based *Gunblade* isn't as polished as its later sequel, but still moves at an impressive speed.




While these are nigh-on arcade-perfect replicas, Sega has included a number of additional features that unlock, *Ghost Squad*-style. Play *Gunblade NY* and you'll have the option to take part in an excellent mini-game that gives you a minute to blast through each stage. High scores upon finishing stages will reward you with alternative levels to fight your way through, while increasing your rank grants you access to new weapons for each game. It's a nice touch, but does lack the sheer amount of variety that the aforementioned *Ghost Squad* offered.

Still considering that you're getting two solid blasters for under £20, it would be churlish to complain. This is a budget price for a budget game that will be obvious to anyone who picks it up. And yet that cheapness doesn't detract from the fact that this new compilation remains a satisfying, if rather simplistic, blaster.

### OPINION




It might be a contender for the ugliest game on the Wii, but what this pack lacks in looks it makes up for in good old-fashioned Nineties gunplay. This is also the first time that these games have been ported to a home console, which is great for anyone still trying to cram a *Gunblade NY* machine into their living room.

**Stuart Hunt**




» [Wii] Bosses take a huge amount of punishment, so get a friend to join in with you.

### In a nutshell

**Incredibly straightforward, even by lightgun standards, this new double pack from Sega nevertheless offers plenty of fun. It's not quite as comprehensive as past offerings, but it remains a resoundingly solid blaster.**

### >> Scores

| | |
|---|---|
| Presentation | 56% |
| Graphics | 70% |
| Sound | 78% |
| Playability | 90% |
| Addictivity | 82% |
| **Overall** | **80%** |


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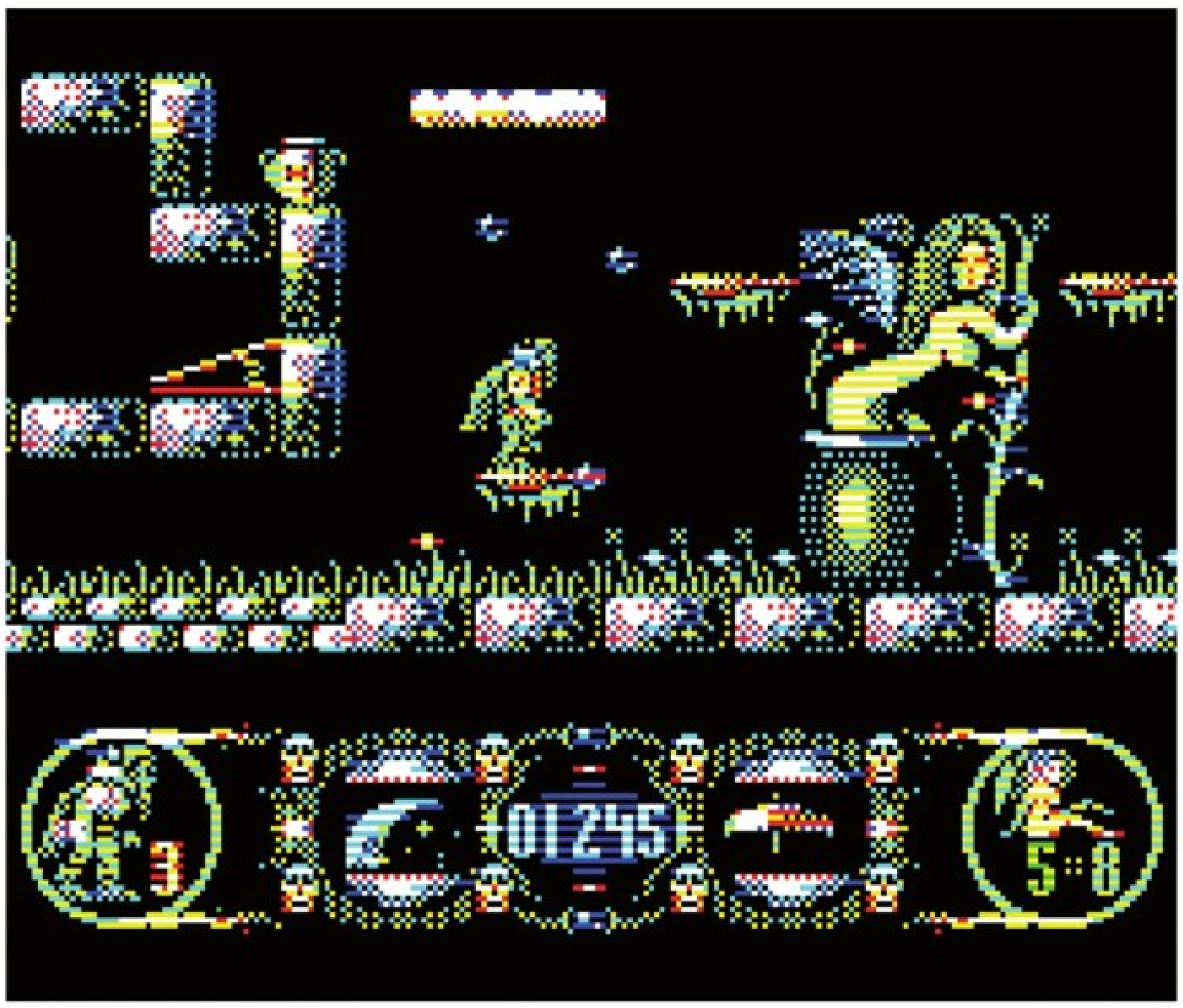

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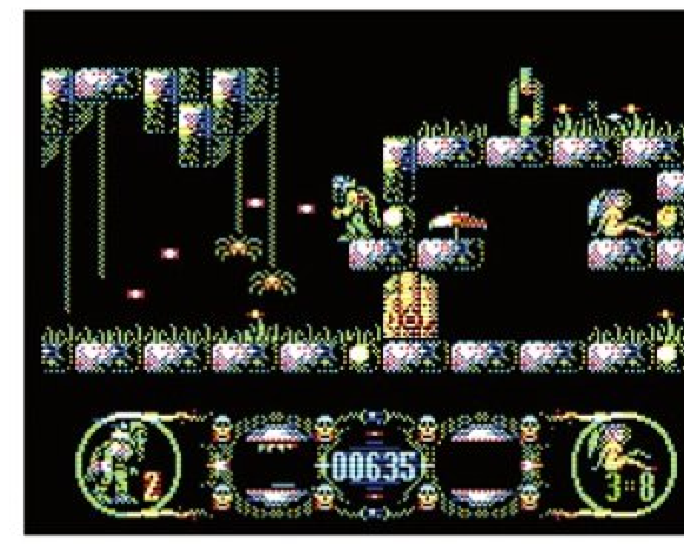

**One of the hardest parts about writing homebrew games – the hardest thing of all is actually finishing and releasing the game – is balancing the difficulty. Usually the developers are the only people playing their game for the first six months, and that can cloud their judgement. Without feedback from test pilots who haven't played the game previously, indies risk releasing a title that is too frustrating to enjoy**

# STORMLORD

## LIKE THE LORD OF THE DANCE, BUT WITH LIGHTNING




» [Oric] Raindrops keep falling on my head.




» [Oric] I hear you knocking…




» [Oric] He says there's a storm coming in.



» **FORMAT:** ORIC
» **DEVELOPED BY:** TWILIGHTE
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/STORMLORD
» **RELEASE DATE:** 2010
» **PRICE:** FREE
» **REVIEWED BY:** JASON KELK

**The Stormlord has been charged with freeing the imprisoned fairy folk from the evil queen to restore peace and tranquillity to his land; a number of fairies are scattered around each level and must be rescued before time runs out. Stormy can throw lightning bolts and swords to defend himself against at least some of the Queen's creatures, but many of the helpless heroines are in hard-to-reach places, so he'll need to work out which of the seemingly random objects dotted around the world can be used in order to rescue them. For example, an umbrella will help with a rain cloud that can't be passed otherwise, or the magical shoes can make jumping to higher ledges possible. And to aid in getting around the stage itself, there are magical springboards that catapult our bearded hero through the air.**




» [Oric] Not your fairy godmother.

The Oric is one platform that gets homebrew love in sporadic bursts but, despite having been on something of a hiatus, one of the most well-respected and indeed prolific developers for the machine has always been Jonathan Bristow, who works under the name Twilighte; in the past he has released both conversions from other platforms such as the rather neat *Breakout* variant *Pulsoids*, as well as original games like *Zip 'N' Zap*, an action puzzler similar to *Sensitive* on the C64. His latest project is a little bit of both, because while it's called *Stormlord* and has ports of graphics and music from various 8-bit versions – Bristow has cited the C64 as the main influence – this game isn't a direct conversion of Raffaele Cecco's game.

The scrolling backgrounds of the original have been traded for static screens and the level layouts appear to have been created especially for the Oric. The graphics themselves appear to be converted from the Spectrum, and the elements that most people remember from the original are present – okay yes, we're talking about the naked fairies here – but every trick in the book has been used to wedge as much colour as possible into them. The results are more intense than the source material and the process doesn't introduce any colour clash, but there's also the option of a monochrome display for the main play area if things get too much. The sound is based on the title tune from the C64, which is reused during play at a slower tempo unless the sound effects have been selected from the menu.

*Stormlord* was always a difficult game, and that arduousness has also been carried over to the Oric, so completing the first of its three levels without running out of time – which results in a 'game over' regardless of remaining lives – will take some practise. Fans of the original will probably find this similarly enjoyable, and Oric fans generally should be pleased that there's a new game to play, although those players with low frustration thresholds are likely to find themselves wanting to hurl objects at the telly after five or six goes.

**78%**

# NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
**retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

# MAGIC TOKENS

**REVIEWED BY:** JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** SINCLAIR SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** SHIRU
» **DOWNLOAD:** MOJONTWINS.COM » **PRICE:** FREE

**Although there have** been a few attempts at putting the three-of-a-kind game *Bejeweled* onto an 8-bit, this might well be the first time anybody has taken a swing at converting its younger brother *Bejeweled Blitz*. The basic rules are the same: swap pairs of gems over to get rows or columns with three or more matching items in order to make them disappear, but to actually complete a level a quota of special items with glowing centres must be removed before a strict time limit expires.

And when we say strict, we really mean it. The difficulty curve is steep, so running out of time with one solitary gem left happens often and, while nine retries might sound generous, in practise they'll be gobbled up rapidly. But despite the frustration, the urge to have 'just one more go' is strong, even if extended exposure will probably affect a player's sanity!

**81%**




» [Spectrum] The colour for gems is gween.

# HALO 2600

**REVIEWED BY:** JASON KELK

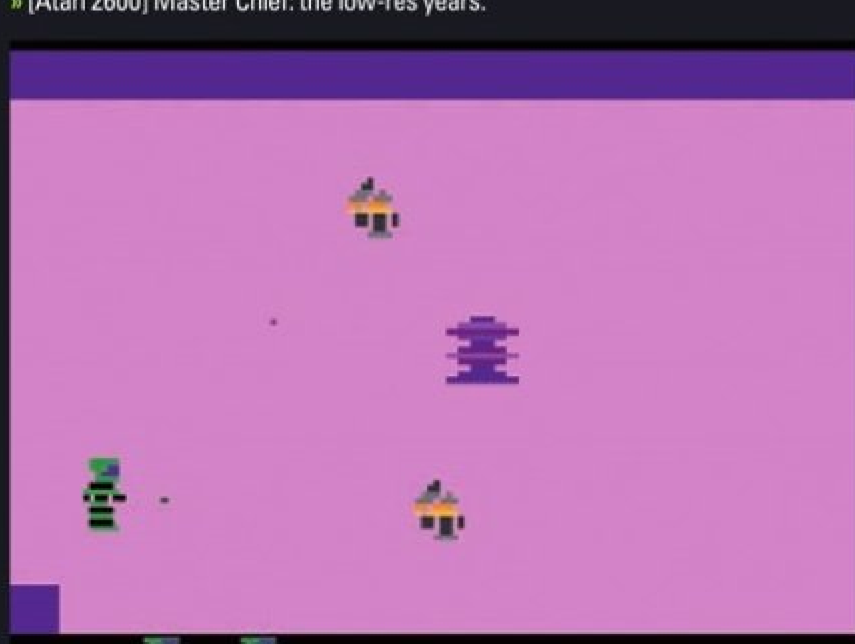
» **FORMAT:** ATARI 2600 » **DEVELOPER:** ED FRIES
» **DOWNLOAD:** MOJONTWINS.COM » **PRICE:** FREE

**Okay, so it** doesn't have 3D graphics, the deep storyline or online co-op, but it was at least programmed by Ed Fries, former vice president of games publishing at Microsoft for most of the original Xbox's commercial life, so it sort of counts! The gameplay is tried and tested flick-screen action, as seen in 2600 classics such as *Adventure* or *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, but with more colourful graphics that bear a loose resemblance to the Xbox original – although Master Chief and a surprisingly large range of Covenant forces look more cute than anything else when rendered by the Atari.

Despite having been crammed into a 4K cartridge, there are over 50 locations between the starting point and final showdown, and a couple of power-ups to grab too – go up at the start for a weapon because you can't fire without it – so, even when the map has been memorised, playing through the game will still take a frantic six or seven minutes.

**83%**

» [Atari 2600] Master Chief: the low-res years.






» [C64] Anyone got any change?

# UWOL, QUEST FOR MONEY

**REVIEWED BY:** JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** THE MOJON TWINS
» **DOWNLOAD:** MOJONTWINS.COM » **PRICE:** FREE

**Well we've really** got to hand it to Uwol: the little money-grabber certainly gets around! He's out to loot the treasure troves of the Storm Palace for a third time, and that still entails manoeuvring through the vaults to grab coins while avoiding contact with the various disembodied heads and tormented spirits that make up the security system. And since Uwol's greed still only knows a few bounds, collecting a horde of cash that will satisfy him is going to take more than one run from top to bottom through the triangular map.

As with the Mega Drive conversion we looked at back in issue 77, all of the good platforming action from the Spectrum original – which appeared way back in issue 75 – has been carried forward to the C64, before being given an extra shot of colour that makes spotting the various security mechanisms easier. All in all, this came as a very pleasant surprise, and hopefully there are more Mojon Twins C64 releases to come.

**91%**

# WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [C64] A walk in the park.

## >> Off to the shops, dearie

David and Richard Darling's C64 'classic' *Bionic Granny* is infamously one of the worst games ever released, as the Retro Shamer award goes some way to demonstrate. Richard Bayliss's latest release, *Bionik Granny Returns*, is an attempt at rectifying what Mastertronic got wrong by copying the gameplay, while inserting new locations, a bonus stage and generally overhauling the presentation.



» [Plus/4] We're going underground.

## >> Exploring the catacombs

As well as being the co-developer of the spiffing *Adventures In Time*, Róbert 'KiCHY' Kisnémeth has put quite a bit of time into converting games to the Commodore Plus/4. His latest endeavour is a port of the dungeon-based action game *Maziacs*, which was originally developed for the Spectrum by Don Priestly and sees players looting a maze of its gold reserves while avoiding nasties.



» [Spectrum] Could we be playing *Saucer* soon?

## >> Final Joffa Smith game to be released?

Readers remembering the tributes in issue 79 might have seen mention of *Saucer*, the Spectrum game he'd been working on. We've heard that his work computer is being archived so that whatever exists of it can be released, but if that doesn't lead to a completed game, programmer Chris Smith has vowed to disassemble the most recent demo version with a mind to finishing it.

# HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

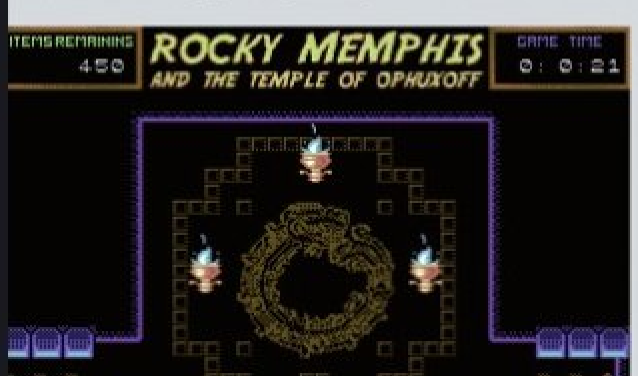
## WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



### >> It's competition time!

A couple of competitions have ended recently, which means lots of new games to play! The first set of releases were from the TIGSource 'game by its cover' competition, where developers built new games around fake cartridge artwork; the results were varied and bizarre, and over 60 releases appeared in total. Ludum Dare 18 was the other event, and had a theme of 'enemies as weapons' and a 48-hour deadline but still netted a staggering 213 games!




### >> Don't call me junior

And once more we've got a spot of Smila news – bet you weren't expecting that! The one-man graphics factory has been busy churning out over 200 screens for a platformer called *Rocky Memphis And The Temple Of Ophuxoff*. These graphics all use the C64 palette, and judging by the video – point a browser at **kikstart.eu/rocky-m** – the look is a little reminiscent of *Rick Dangerous* or the more obscure *Gordian Tomb*.

## FLASH BOREDOM




Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Dino Strike**.

*DINO STRIKE* HAS a similar feel to *Streets Of Rage* and contains many borrowed elements: chainsaw-carrying oafs, street punks with baseball bats, armed mercenaries, whip-wielding women and… cybernetic dinosaurs to rescue from the villains experimenting on them. Okay, so not exactly like *Streets Of Rage*, then.

## REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...

Remake of the Mouth





## ROBOTZ DX

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.RGCD.CO.UK/ROBOTZDX/




**Having been rudely** awakened by his commanding officer, one lowly private has been handed a peashooter of a gun and is now all that stands between the outside world and an army of robots turned homicidal by a failed experiment – and wouldn't you know it, simply shooting the metal marauders isn't going to be enough to defeat them because they're shielded! Thankfully, the shield generators are kept in the same rooms as the robots themselves, so if our hero wants his bullets to do some damage he'll have to blast those generators before turning his sights towards the mechanical menace itself, remembering that your adversaries are not going to sit idle in the meantime.

The original *Robotz* was a fun public domain game for the Atari ST, with a couple of nods to titles like *Berzerk* and *Daleks*. This extended mix takes that original design and runs with it to produce something bigger and more varied. The original graphics have been added to, the range of droids expanded, and bonus items littered about the labs. *Robotz DX* is occasionally rendered more difficult because the locations of objects are randomised at the start of a level, and shield generators can end up placed at the far end of a gauntlet of impervious robots, but the variation in what would otherwise be fixed levels means that the game should always present a challenge.



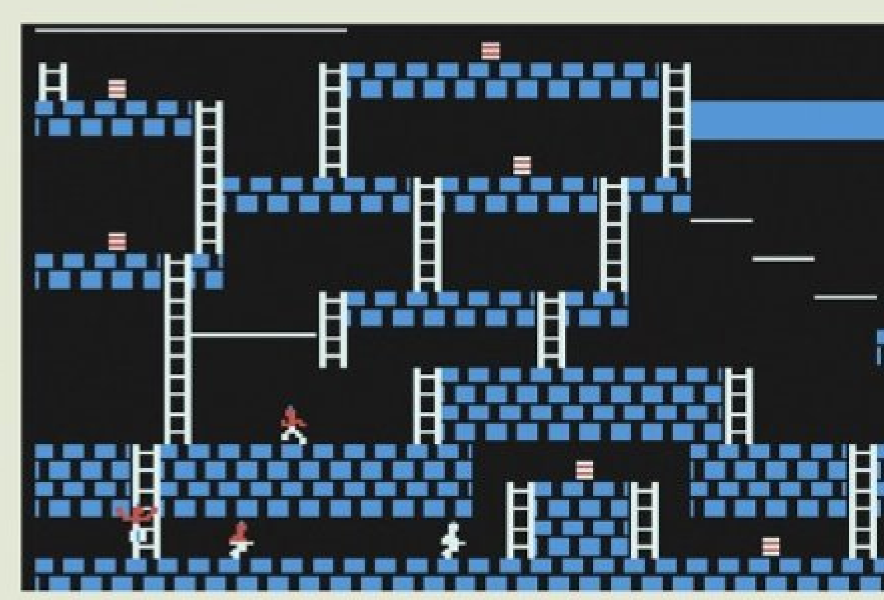
## AVATAR SQUADRON

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/AV-SQUADRON




**This game is** very silly indeed. Graphics are rendered with a cartoon look and everything else reflects that, from the pun-laden dialogue to the extra weapons, which include a bat to volley enemy bullets, the massive magnet that can pick up tanks, and a gigantic hammer that smacks everything straight out of the sky.

There's a reasonable shoot-'em-up underneath that distinctly British humour as well and, despite the large size of the player's plane, it isn't unwieldy to steer – collisions are generous enough to allow you through most scrapes unscathed, and a method to recover from fatal impacts has also been provided. *Avatar Squadron* costs 80 Microsoft Points.



## LODE RUNNER RETURN

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/LR-RETURN




***Lode Runner Return*** boasts graphics converted from the original Apple II game to the Nintendo DS and a vast collection of single-screen levels to deal with – and it'll be putting up a major fight right from the very first. The objective is to outmanoeuvre or temporarily trap the guards while collecting the treasure chests on a stage, then heading up the ladder to the next.

For serious *Lode Runner* aficionados and more general fans of rock-hard platform action, this is probably worth a look for a portable fix, but with so many levels, a difficulty curve that feels steeper than the original, and graphics crammed into the DS that were designed for a much larger television screen, many players are going to find it overwhelmingly hard.



# HOMEBREW HEROES

THIS ISSUE WE'VE GRABBED A FEW WORDS FROM **SANDRO 'WOODMASTER' MESTRE**, SINCE HE'S JUST RELEASED A C64 CONVERSION OF UWOL, QUEST FOR MONEY ONTO A LARGELY UNSUSPECTING WORLD

Q&A

**Retro Gamer: What was it that got you into programming games for the C64?**

**Sandro Mestre:** Long ago when I got my first computer, a Timex 2048, I started to code in BASIC and later in Z80 assembler. Me and a group of friends started to make some games. The coding skills were not that great but we enjoyed drawing graphics on squared paper and then passing them to the computer and then trying to code the game – not very successfully, I must say. Then, four years later, I got my C64 and never looked back. I started to code in BASIC and moved to 6510 (6502) assembler later on – I was very fortunate in that I came across the book *Commodore 64 Programmer's Reference Guide* in a bookshop because this allowed me to really start to explore the hardware. Then I had other computers like the Amiga 500 and then the PC, but I never stopped toying with my C64. When finally I had access to the internet, I realised how much I missed from the golden era. I had never seen a demo before – well, sort of: I was gobsmacked years before with the *Creatures* demo that came in one of the *Zzap!64* tapes. Seeing all the demos I missed and many games I never had the opportunity to put my hands on, I started again to code, but this time I had much more resources where I could learn much more about the C64 and 6502 coding.

**RG: And how did you get involved with converting *Uwol*?**

**SM:** Well, it all started when I started to look for other languages to code the C64. I saw that people wanted to code for the C64 but were scared of assembler or had no time to learn it but they already knew C, so I started to look first at Slang, but unfortunately I couldn't go very far with it, so next I tried Aztec C and CC65. I decided to go for CC65 as it is a very much alive project and I started to code my C64lib library of assembler routines, a generic library developed to help people code games for the C64 using CC65. Then I thought that it would be cool if I used it to code some games, as an example. I asked the Mojon Twins if they would be interested in a C64 version of *Uwol*, and they were, so I started to work on it and in two weeks it was done. When I have the code in a presentable way and C64lib reaches a mature version, I will release it.

**RG: Do you have plans to convert any other Mojon Twins titles? There are a couple to choose from!**

**SM:** Indeed. They have a nice heap of titles there, and yes, I am thinking of converting other games to the C64 and other 6502 machines. For example, I am quite interested in porting *Zombie Calavera*, among others.

**RG: On your YouTube channel there are a couple of games that look reasonably close to completion. Can you tell us a bit more about them?**

**SM:** You mean *Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle* and *iLogicAll*? *Nanako* is virtually finished; I think it can be released at any time soon. *iLogicAll* is not so advanced, but the core engine of the game is done. I just need to get some motivation to finish it. Both games are coded in assembler.

**RG: You've been mostly working on conversions, but have you any designs of your own that you'd like to implement?**

**SM:** Yes, but I also have several original game projects in mind and some I have started to work on already. I am working with Agod, who is doing the graphics. I want also to release my C64lib sometime in the future, as I mentioned before.

**RG: Finally, what advice can you give to anybody wanting to become involved in homebrew development?**

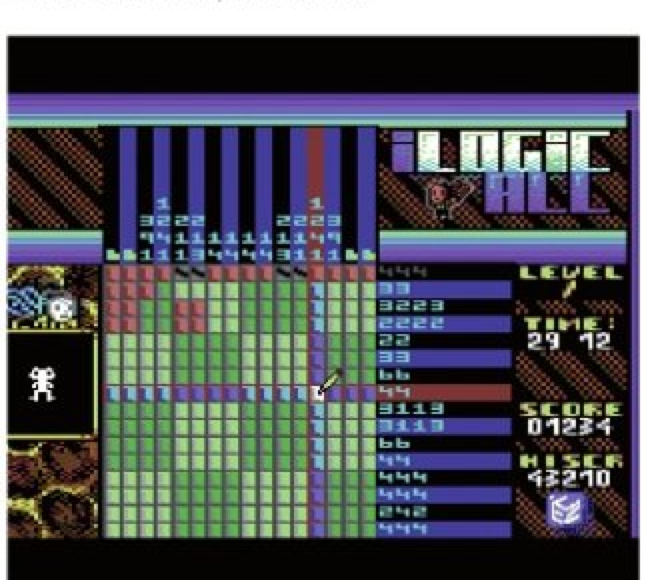
**SM:** My advice is to read a lot about the hardware and then code, code, code. See other people's code, hack it, play with it to see the different effects you get by changing it. If you are just starting, then pick up BASIC or C, then move to assembler; you can learn enough machine language to use it along with C to give it a boost. If you really want to move on and code all those nice effects you see in demos, then assembler is the way to go. But games are not only about all the tricks: they are about playability. If you can produce a game that is fun and people keep coming back to play it then you have reached your goal.



» [C64] Scantily clad heroine Nanako on the C64.




» [C64] See? Scantily clad heroine!




» [C64] A conversion of *iLogicAll*.

## HIGH FIVE

The homebrew games that Sean can't live without

1. **Joe Gun (C64)** Awesome game, adventure, fun, and nice puzzles, cool animation and a nice soundtrack.
2. **Knight 'N' Grail (C64)** What can I say? I like this type of game, loads of nice touches, the C64 hardware put to good use.
3. **Space: 1999 (Oric)** I had to add this one, as I like the Oric, isometric games and *Space: 1999*.
4. **Zombie Calavera (Speccy)** This one has very nice graphics, which do a lot for the game's atmosphere, which is why I have it here – I think the concept can be taken further.
5. **Not Even Human (C64)** Simple, fast action, cool concept – the right ingredients for a good game.

# MAILBAG

**HAVE YOUR SAY…** SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

## PLAYING VICARIOUSLY

Hello Darran,

My very first computer was a Commodore VIC-20, and I graduated to a C64 in the late Eighties. I have played games intermittently on other platforms for the last 20 years. One thing has always remained the same, though: I am absolutely rubbish at almost all of them. I've only ever completed two games in 30 years, which is pathetic. And, weirdly, that's why I love **Retro Gamer**, because it allows me to appreciate the artistry of games I'm too useless to play through myself.

Ray

**Glad to hear that you're enjoying the magazine, but sorry to hear about your difficulties. Although, to be fair, how many people complete all their games in this day and age? Stuart gave up on *Alan Wake*, Darran put about 80 hours into *Monster Hunter Tri* and the end is still nowhere in sight, and Steve simply plays *FIFA 10*.**

## LEGEND SCHMEGEND

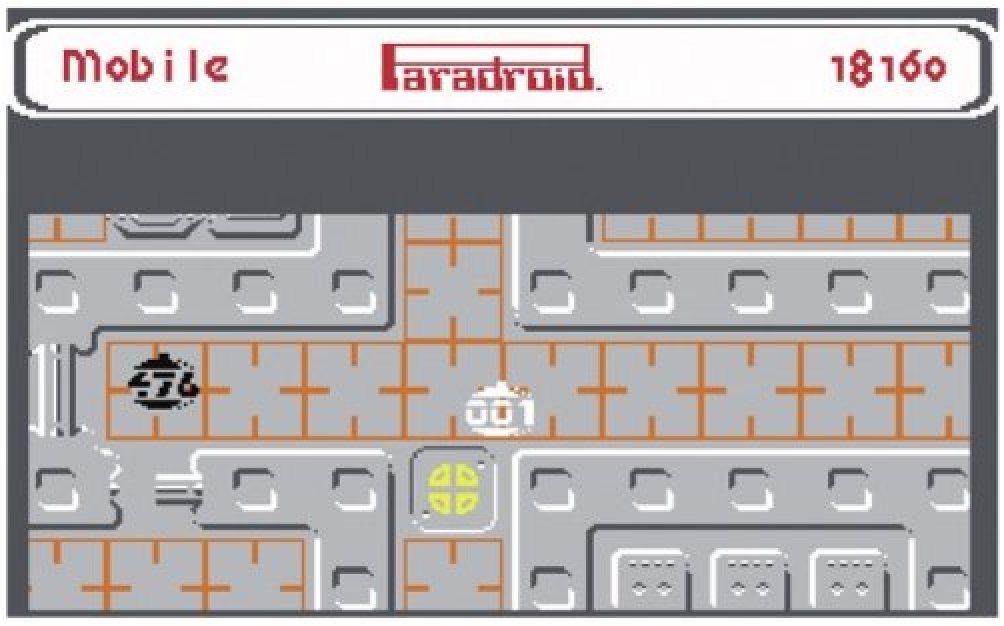
Dear **Retro Gamer**,

In future, would you mind not splashing the word 'legend' around as if it means nothing. Over the last couple of issues you've described both Steve Lycett and Eric Schwartz as "industry legends" – two people that have contributed nothing to the field.

Thanks,

Willy, via email

**We showed your letter to the mothers of both Steve Lycett and Eric Schwartz, and both of them were incredibly upset. We'll certainly keep it in mind, but the definition of 'legend' is in the eye of the beholder. So Steve Lycett will always be a legend to us because he's been behind some of the best Sega games of the past five years, and we love Sega.**




» [C64] Ray must have been gutted to receive a C64 instead of an Amstrad CPC. Still, at least he got to play the awesome *Paradroid*.

## AN AMIGA FAN WRITES

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

First and foremost I would like to thank you for so much enjoyable media over the years. I started reading from issue 6, and haven't missed one since. In fact, I have been a subscriber for the last year and a half.

I have always enjoyed your magazine. It is well written, usually exhaustively researched, and has helped educate me extensively about a hobby that I love.

However, I have been recently finding myself picking up the magazine as it pops through my letterbox with less enthusiasm. What could be dampening my zeal? I suspect it has to do with my history of platform ownership.

My earliest machine was the Dragon 32. Now I don't expect monthly in-depth coverage of so specific a machine, and I know you do mention it when relevant. I followed this up with an Amiga 500, later a 1200, and I think this is where the issue lies. The Amiga family was outstandingly popular, as you well know, both in the UK and

## STAR LETTER

### SPOT THE STAR PRIZE



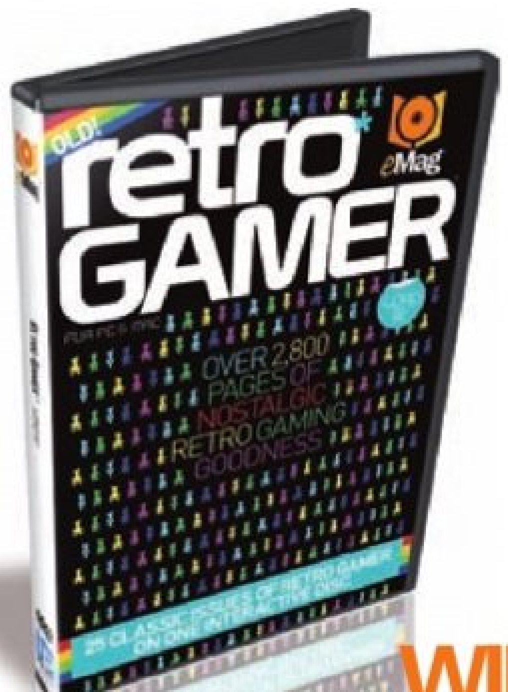
Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Here are the answers to the Spot The Difference you published last month. There are 37 differences, including some that move in the other image and others that change the colour. I hope you and the other readers enjoyed my challenge.

Jose Luis Martinez Serrano

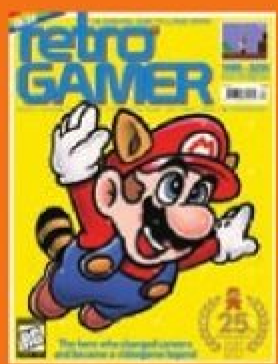
**Many thanks for this, Jose. Darran was convinced he'd found 40 differences between the two pictures, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that he really is an idiot.**

**Have an eMag for making such an enjoyable time-waster, and let us know if you have any others.**




**WIN!**

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



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**Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk




## YOUTUBE UPDATE

FAMILY COMMITMENTS AND an obsession with *Supernatural* have meant that Darran's been neglecting YouTube this month. He's in the process of reviewing quite a few Virtual Console releases, so check out classy gems like *Wild Guns*, *Donkey Kong Country* and *Castlevania III* at:
**www.youtube.com/user/RetroGamerDaz**





» We've created the following mathematical equation, where the two above images equal legend.

elsewhere. I have always looked for anything Amiga-related in the mag first – thanks for the moment with Eric Schwartz. However, I seem to find that Amiga coverage has dropped off a bit over recent issues. For example, in issue 80, it is just the aforementioned article, and the Amiga is mentioned briefly in Coin-Op Capers – appropriately, it is the Amiga version of *Ikari Warriors* that I enjoyed.

Now, if this were limited to just one issue, it could be excused. Alas, if that were so I would not feel compelled to write! In issue 79 the Amiga gets brief mention for its excellent conversion of *Rainbow Islands*. I also enjoyed the article on *Micro Machines*, but was distressed to note that the Amiga version I played was clearly either some strange unofficial unlicensed clone or obviously fell through some kind of portal from some other universe. Even Wikipedia notes that it came out on the Amiga, but your article seems to omit any reference to that version.

I suspect it is just a small error, but taken in conjunction with the lack of Amiga articles recently, which makes the mag feel very 'console-centric', it makes me wonder if there is no one on your team who currently champions the Amiga at all.

Anyway, this is longer than it needs to be to plead for more Amiga content, so I'd better wrap it up. Apologies it is so wordy, but I would love to know your thoughts on this.

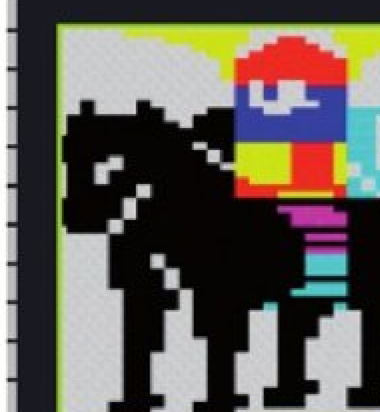
Keep up the fine work!

Dave Corby, via email

**Sorry to hear that you've found the last few issues lacking in content, Dave. We will aim to get more Amiga content into the magazine, but a lot of it comes down to what is pitched. Regular contributor Ashley Day is a bit of an Amiga fiend, so we'll have a word with him, and there's a making of *Banshee* in the pipeline, but we'll certainly do our best to get more in. Of course, the downside to this is that you'll then get other readers complaining that there is too much Amiga content in comparison to their favourite machines. It's not an easy job getting the balance right, but we'll look into it.**

> "I've only ever completed two games in 30 years, which is pathetic"

## RETROBATE PROFILE



| | |
|---|---|
| Name: | Geoff Neil |
| Joined: | 15 August 2009 |
| Location: | Nottingham |
| Occupation: | IT |
| Website: | Not given |
| Fave Games Systems: | ZX Spectrum |




» [Amiga] Dave wasn't the only one to point out that *Micro Machines* did indeed come out on the Amiga. David Crookes has been strung up in the garden for the birds to peck at.

## BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles




High Score: 253,800




### DARRAN

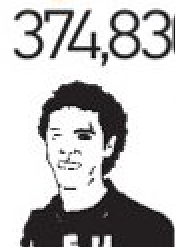
**CHOSEN GAME:** DRAGON NINJA

**Why I picked it:** I wanted to see if it was still amazing fun to play. It wasn't.

**Handy tip:** Take out every red ninja, as you'll be rewarded with handy health and weapon drops when you do so.




High Score: 374,830




### STUART

**CHOSEN GAME:** DARIUS

**Why I picked it:** For no reason other than it was the first game that popped into my head, and we were on deadline.

**Handy tip:** 'Try not to get shot' is always a good tip. Oh, and keep a safe distance from the ground.




High Score: 602,790




### DAVID

**CHOSEN GAME:** CHIP'S CHALLENGE

**Why I picked it:** I'm a huge fan of the game, so this was a great excuse to return to it again.

**Handy tip:** Well, I looked at the high score and it's over 5 million, so I could probably do with advice. Any tips?

# From the forum

## » To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

**Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…**

## What's your favourite moment in a Mario game?

**jdanddiet** Whenever I turn it off.

**harlequ1n** When I manage to pull off some tricky flying patterns in *Super Mario World*, it makes me feel the man.

**HalyconDaze00** Powering up Giana to get her the mohawk haircut.

**RetroBob** *Super Mario Land*. The last level, the chicken-firing cloud mini-boss and Tatanga (final boss) is very satisfying to beat, and the end music is just sublime.

**pforson** Eating Magic Mushrooms.

**paranoid marvin** The opening level from *Mario 64*, realising that it WAS possible to successfully translate a game from the second to the third dimension.

**TwoHeadedBoy** The map screen in *Super Mario Land 2* and its many quirks, such as getting shrunk and eaten by the giant turtle.

**Scapegoat** The first time I completed the rivet screen on *Donkey Kong*. Rarely have I had such a feeling of accomplishment from an arcade game.

**Fishta** Realising with each new iteration that *Mario* games can transcend technological advances without losing the charm of the original, and in fact make new players yearn to play the original and still enjoy it. Sure, it's not for everyone, but then neither is coffee.

**Jet Pilot** When I played *Super Mario World* for the first time. It was the first 16-bit game I played on my brand new SNES. The transition from 8-bit to 16-bit *Mario* was just astonishing when I saw it for the first time with my own eyes. The colours were so bright, the animation was so smooth and the music just sung from my SNES. Even with the upgrades the game still felt as good as the very first *Super Mario Bros*.

**thevulture** I've yet to experience one. Believe you me, I've tried. Played the *Mario* games on the NES, SNES, N64. Just cannot seem to get into them – and I like platformers.

**Edwards80** Going onto your mate's SNES while he isn't looking and deleting his *Super Mario World* saves.

**Morkin** I know it'll sound strange, but just the memories of playing *Mario Golf: Advance Tour* on the Game Boy Advance in the garden, at just the right angle to the sun. That game absolutely captivated me from start to finish and is easily one of my favourite portable games of all time.

**Skull Commander** I think I'm going to go with the first time I mastered flying with the feather power-up in *Super Mario World* and managed to get across a whole level in the air with the cape.

**Joey** Finding, without help, the first Warp Flute in the first castle of *Super Mario 3*.

**Mire Mare** It's the first time I saw one of those gorgeous pools of liquid in Super *Mario 64*. I stared at the shiny and colourful oily ripples that hid the entrance to Hazy Maze for ages. A real 'stop you in your tracks' gaming moment.

**SirClive** I know *Mario* games are technically good, but the character just puts me off. Someone needs to punch that stupid hat off his self-satisfied smug face!

**Jeremiah Jones** The best moment has to be playing the opening level of a new *Mario* game right after it's been released. Nintendo pours effort into each *Mario* game and into making sure you get a euphoric feeling from starting each new one.

**Dunjohn** Standing just underneath Bowser as you defeat him at the end of *Super Mario World*, so it looks like Mario goes up Peach's skirt when she drops.

**Riddler** *Super Mario Bros 3*, World 4: Giant Land. First time I got there, was just cool to see.

**DeadZoo** That bit in the second level of *Super Mario Bros* when some clever block-breaking and jumping lets you run along the top of the playfield – where your score and lives are! – and not only skip the level, but get to a handy Warp Zone that lets you skip the next few levels if you like! It's amazing the first time you see it done, and even more amazing when you pull it off yourself!

**batman877** Finally finding Yoshi in *Super Mario Sunshine*. Everyone loved it at the time, but it's now the black sheep of the franchise.

## YOUR OPINION PLEASE

### BEST DOOM CLONES

**drewbar** A mate and I really enjoyed the humour value of *Redneck Rampage* for a few days.

**pottyboy** *Fears* on the Amiga is one that springs to my mind. It was nowhere near as good as *Doom*, but at least it did have a level editor, which was great fun.

**Antiriad2097** *3D Monster Maze*.

**Juggernaut Headcrush** *Alien Breed 3D*. Even the demo given away free with *Amiga Format* was brilliant. True 3D environments, a grenade launcher that could ricochet grenades off walls/around corners, the satisfying squelch of shooting the red hellhounds with the infamous shotgun. Classic.

**Uaithne** No one's mentioned *Rise Of The Triad* – probably the only FPS I thought could beat Doom.

### FORGOTTEN HEROES

**Ferret Oxide** Bonk and Chuck Rock for bringing dinosaurs and historical inaccuracy to the genre.

**IronMaidenRule** Alfred the chicken!

**TwoHeadedBoy** Let's not also be forgetting Chuck D Head: gaming's greatest animated corpse!

**Skull Commander** Best unsung platform hero for me is Plok. Not only is he vastly superior to Rayman and Dynamite Heady, but also he has some of the coolest power-ups ever such as Squire Plok, Rocky Plok, and Flamethrower Plok.

**Sir Hilary Bray** I remember playing *Superfrog*, after someone on here said it was on par with *Mario* and *Sonic*.

### DREAMCAST SHMUPS

**nemerodius** Since I have never played any Dreamcast shooters, I'm on the verge of buying a Jap Dreamcast. What I would like to know is:
1. Are the blasters from Cave et al good?
2. What are the top blasters?
3. I have lived on a diet of Konami shoot-'em-ups for over 20 years, so please, only the best!

**Tellah** The best DC shooter, and best shooter of all IMO, is *Under Defeat*. Simply stunning mechanics, graphics and audio. Outstanding!

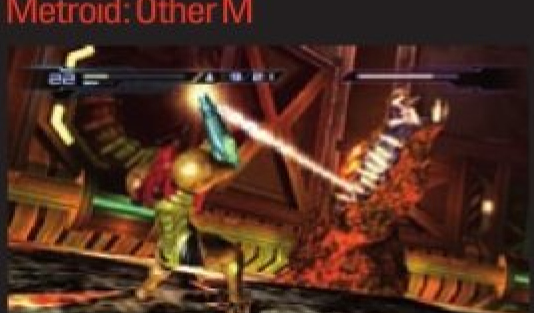
**kiniki** I know it's probably a cliché to mention *Ikaruga*. But seriously I cannot recommend it enough. I never really played shmups at all. Then I saw a video of *Ikaruga* on the 'Net. As soon as I played it I was hooked.

**Seadog74** Don't think anyone has mentioned *Shikigami No Shiro 2* yet. Also known as *Castle Shikigami 2* to PAL PS2 owners. It's quite a polished shmup.

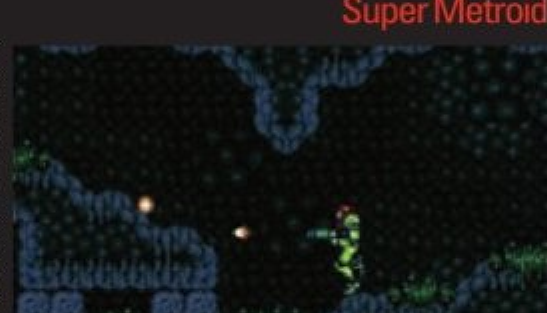
## OLD vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which side-scrolling Metroid is the best?

**Metroid: Other M**



**Super Metroid**



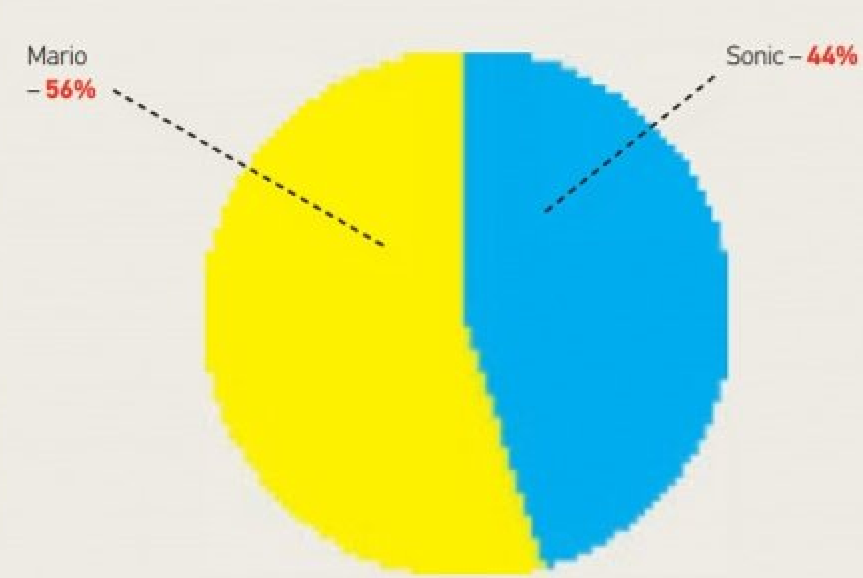
13% | 87%

**Smurph** *Other M* switches *Super Metroid* into 3D quite well, but it's not as good

**Miketendo** There's absolutely no comparison. *Super Metroid* wins this one by a landslide

## HOT TOPIC

**Who's best? Mario or Sonic?**




"Sonic was just a fast hedgehog who acted like an arse. Also Mario made the transition to 3D flawlessly, something that Sonic is yet to do" **– davekam**

"Sonic. He's got attitude yo!" **– Joey**

"Mario all the way. His games are far deeper, more varied, more challenging and have more replay value" **– ToxieDogg**

CONTACT US **Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



[GBA] The new Future Classic feature has gone down extremely well with most readers.

## BEST ARTICLE EVER

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Just wanted to write in and say that I absolutely adored issue 81's Future Classic article. In fact, I was so impressed with your coverage of *Metroid: Zero Mission* that I tracked down a copy on eBay and have been playing it ever since. While I wouldn't go as far as to say it's better than *Super Metroid*, it is amazingly good and I can definitely see myself returning to it in the future. I hope this sort of coverage continues.

Lee Cooper, via email

## WORST ARTICLE EVER

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Last month's appalling article about *Metroid: Zero Mission* proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have no idea about retro gaming. The GBA is not retro by a long shot, and while I haven't read the article in question I'm positive that it will be of no real value to true retro gamers. To make matters worse, I saw that you'll be featuring a GameCube game in your next issue. Is this what **Retro Gamer** has now come to? Writing about uninspiring games that aren't retro because it can't be bothered to do proper research? If this sort of unintelligent coverage continues I may be forced to review my commitment to your magazine.

Matthew Lightbourne, via email

**We knew that introducing Future Classic would receive some criticism, but we've been pleasantly surprised by the positive letters we've received. Of course, we don't mind the odd negative comment here and there. It just shows how diverse the taste of our readership actually is.**

> "Last month's appalling article proves that you have no idea about retro gaming"

**DISCUSSED THIS MONTH**

**Let's Create! Pottery**

**After forking out £425 for his Apple iPad, Darran has finally discovered an actual use for it. Work has now ground to a daily halt due to Stuart, Steve and Darran all taking it in turns to create elaborate pottery designs on the ingeniously named *Let's Create! Pottery*. Needless to say you can find a pastiche of the famous scene from *Ghost* on Darran's YouTube channel.**

## WISH YOU WERE HERE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

After looking on from a distance for the past decade, I decided it was time to visit the Classic Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. It would involve a 20-hour trip each way and putting up with ridiculous desert temperatures, but I suppose these are the trials we face for our hobby. Pretty much every aspect of the show was enjoyable, but the standout feature had to be the Video Game Museum. It has to be seen to be believed.

Naturally I brought **Retro Gamer** along with me. What better way was there to kill that travelling time? It was nice to see some of the Americans with copies too. Obviously the word must be spreading.

Alan, via email

**One day we'll get to visit CGE. It does look like a truly sensational event and we're deeply jealous of your signed David Crane issue. Maybe we'll get to visit it next year…**




Alan proudly shows off his issue of Retro Gamer at one of the world's biggest retro events.

## CURRENTLY PLAYING






**DARRAN**

**Magic The Gathering Online**

This month I've invested $180 in a Valakut Ramp deck in a bid to go infinite online, which means winning enough tournaments that you claw back all the money you spent in the first place. The bad news? I'm not very good at it.






**STUART**

**Kuru Kuru Kururin**

I discovered the addictive charms of *Kuru Kuru Kururin* this month. I've not been able to put it down and was gutted when I finished it. I'm now on the hunt for the sequels to satisfy my irritating stick obsession.






**DAVID**

**Mafia II**

A part of me is getting a little tired of driving round city streets à la *Grand Theft Auto*, but this game still has me hooked for some strange reason that I can't quite fathom. Capiche?

retro GAMER

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To Mario for being super for 25 years

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# next month

>> LOAD 83

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## The King Of Kong

**As Donkey Kong swings back into action on the Wii, we take a look back at the Country franchise and bust open the original Donkey Kong coin-op**



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



### James Bond

■ With *GoldenEye* imminent, we brief you on every single *Bond* game and Q you in to the ones you should care about



### Al Acorn

■ We manage to sit down with the creator of *Pong* and discover what he thinks about helping to create the industry



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■ We speak to Yasuhiro Wada about combining farming with RPGs and creating one of the SNES's most unique games



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# RETRO SPOTLIGHT

## RETRO GAMER SPEAKS TO **REWIND-GAMING.CO.UK**



**■ What was the first retro videogame you played?**
The first one I vividly remember was *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* on the Master System. I like that answer, because it makes me feel young, when the reality is that I didn't get into gaming until relatively late in my life.

**■ What's your best gaming memory?**
That's a tough one. It's between playing two-player split-screen *Road Rash* on the Mega Drive while avoiding work at uni, and unwrapping my PlayStation 1 – the very first console I bought for myself with my own money. I'd go with *Road Rash*, I think; that game is still awesome today.

**■ Which game could you not live without?**
I'm fairly nomadic with gaming, happy to move on when I get bored, so there isn't a game that comes to mind that I'd miss too badly. Of course, if the *Zelda* or *Shining Force* games vanished overnight, I'd be more than a little sad!

**■ Similarly, what gaming system could you not live without?**
The SNES. I actually have a small shrine to the SNES, in a secret chamber in the corner of my office, that nobody knows about. Maybe.

**■ Can you tell us about Rewind Gaming? When did you set it up?**
Rewind is about a year and a half old now; we're definitely the new kid on the block in retro gaming. But that doesn't make us amateurs by any means. We're bringing ideas and products to the retro gaming scene almost constantly.

**■ How did the idea originate?**
Our main site, **rewind-gaming.co.uk**, has a fairly simple story: I wanted to sell retro games. That's about it. Our new site, **rewind-bits.co.uk**, started as an experiment – which makes for a far more exciting story. As a tinkerer myself, I wanted to offer up a 'hardware store for the gamer', which is what it's become after just nine months. I'm very happy with that.

**■ What features and content can users expect to see on your website?**
As well as a vast array of retro games, consoles, accessories and parts, you can seamlessly skip over to articles and support forums. For example, if your old Game Boy *Pokémon* games don't save any more, you can find the right battery, then go straight to a detailed guide, which will give you the confidence you need to fix it yourself.

**■ What has been the reaction to the website so far?**
Very positive indeed. We are still trying to get word out as to what our site can offer, and more importantly, to actively encourage retro enthusiasts to see their consoles as repairable and not to throw them out so readily. It's really not as scary as it sounds, and very rewarding when you do something for yourself, like fixing up that broken console or scratched screen that's been bugging you for years. Retro consoles and games are a finite resource, so we should get as much out of them as we can.

**■ What can users look forward to?**
Our plans for the next year include more products, constant fresh stock, and, importantly, more support in the modding/repair areas, primarily in the form of improving the user forum and many more guides and help articles. We're planning to set up a really informative newsletter soon too. It's all about spreading the word!



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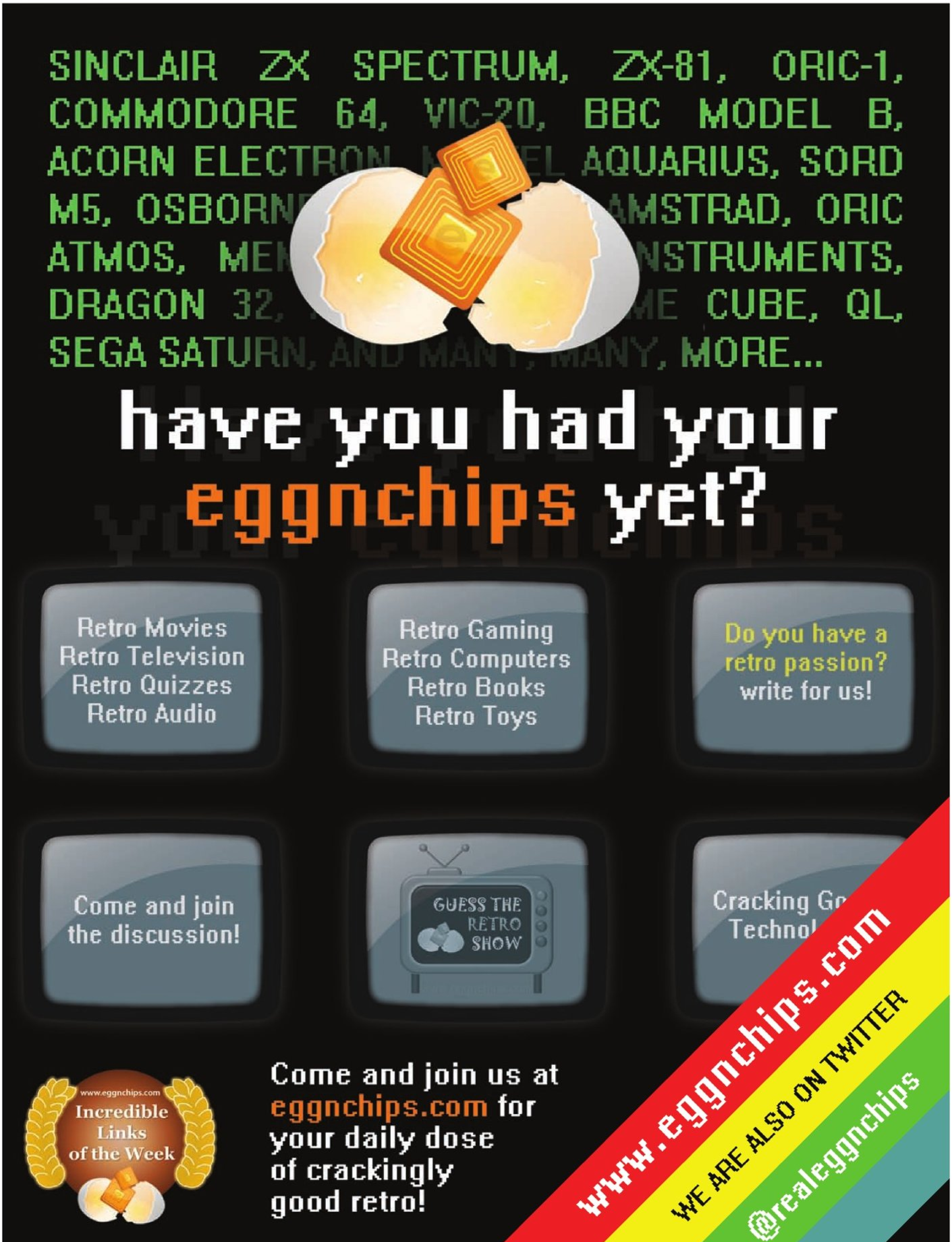

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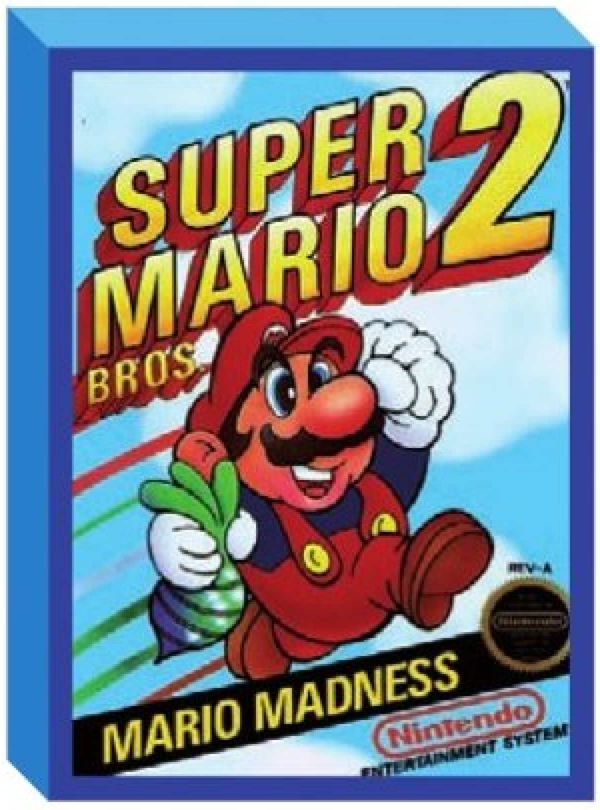
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# ENDGAME




## SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

» We admit to having a soft spot for SMB2, and with all the Mario love going on we decided to give the game its moment in the spotlight by dedicating this last page to its ending. Most of Mario's adventures end flatly, but at least this game had a cinematic outro, albeit a hackneyed one. Still, the joy of Mario games has always been in the playing, not the finishing.



01

» Mario and friends defeat the evil giant frog Wart and unplug the vase to release the pale-faced winged children of this bizarre universe back into its atmosphere. With the children free, peace has once again been restored to this world.




02

» Our four heroes stand patiently atop a large golden mantelpiece as the game tallies up which of them has done the most sterling legwork. Meanwhile, at the base of the screen, a dazed Wart is seen crowd-surfing on the angry children.




03

» It seems Wart wasn't crowd-surfing at all. The kids had actually constructed a makeshift bonfire slightly off-screen and were forcing this frog into the flames, with plans to serve his giant legs up for a nice late supper later that evening.



04

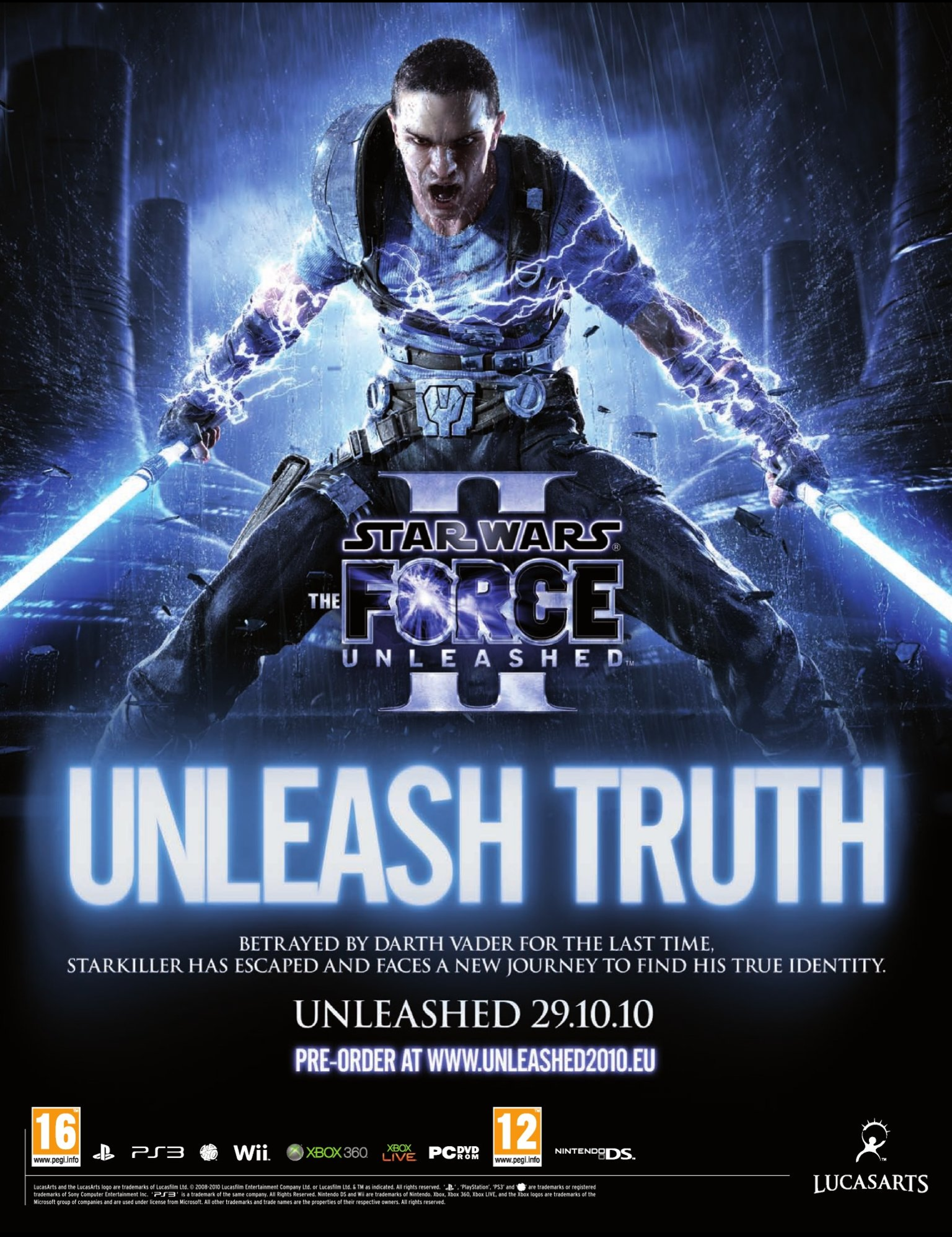
» But then the game drops a bombshell by revealing that the entire mission has been a bit of a sham; Mario has been dreaming it up all along. This might have been an original way to end a game in 1988, but now feels as passé as pompous poetry.




05

» It's then that Mario drifts back off to sleep where he probably starts dreaming of another adventure, or maybe he replays this one again, or perhaps relives a previous one. Or maybe he just dreams of owning his own turnip farm…


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